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A FAIR AND CANDID
A D D R E S S
TO
THE BRITISH NOBILITY;
ACCOMPANIED WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS AND PROOFS
OF THE ADVANTAGE OF
Hereditary Rank and Title
IN A FREE COUNTRY.

By W. PLAYFAIR, Esq.

INVENTOR OF LINEAR ARITHMETIC, AUTHOR OF AN ENQUIRY INTO THE
CAUSES OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF NATIONS; EDITOR OF
THE LAST EDITION OF DR. SMITH'S ENQUIRY, WITH
NOTES AND A SUPPLEMENT, &c. &c.

A House of Peers sitting, each voting in their own right, and independent of the King and the People, is the best means of preserving the rights of both, and securing liberty.

LONDON:

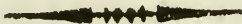
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AC 911, 1809. P59

THE READER IS REQUESTED TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THIS

ADVERTISEMENT.



IN the course of publishing the Work, intitled FAMILY ANTIQUITY ; I have thought it necessary to concentrate, in one small volume, the principal circumstances that give it a claim to encouragement; in doing which, I beg those royal and noble personages who have honoured me with their patronage, to accept of my most grateful thanks.

The Work itself is of the nature of those long and intricate calculations, the chief value of which consists in their result—Though I trust, that the histories of individual families give satisfaction, information, and entertainment, yet the great end of the Work is of another nature, and for another purpose. It is to prove the merit and utility of a hereditary race of nobles, by an appeal to fact, and, as the whole proofs

are before the public, I could never venture to draw any deduction from them that on inspection would not be found to be fair and true.

As the Work is voluminous and expensive, its operation on public opinion must be by concentrating the most material and important truths it contains; referring to the Work itself for their reality.

This small publication is intended for that purpose; it contains important truths, but the vouchers for those truths are contained in the large Work; without which, this small one would merely deserve the name of a Political Reverie.

The encouragers of the Work are then requested to consider, that it is by their support alone that this could have existed.—The truths lay hid, as if under the ground, and their generous support has enabled me to bring them forth in such a manner as must have the most happy influence, in protecting Hereditary Rank, from the rude ravage of modern reformers; who, though they have no respect for institutions, on account of their origin or antiquity, still profess a regard to what is PRACTICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS.

I have proved the PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES of HEREDITARY NOBILITY; thereby silencing those who would persuade the public at large to think that institution either useless or incon-

venient: which is a very important point to the whole of society, but particularly to the members of that order.

I have already succeeded in making the utility of this Work understood to the greater number of the nobility, as well as to many gentlemen, who have not titles, but who, feeling the importance of the undertaking, have generously patronised it. There are still, however, some of the nobility, who, I suppose, from not having taken time to consider the nature and tendency of the Work, have not thought proper to favour it with their encouragement. I say, that I suppose it is from not taking time, for it cannot be supposed that, if they knew that I was fighting in their cause, they would refuse to imitate those Peers who feel for, and support, the Common Interest. I am persuaded there is not a Peer in Britain who would not exclaim with the virtuous Roman:

I should have blush'd, if Cato's house had stood
Aloof, or flourished in a civil war.

Thoughts are the seeds of actions, and the most formidable revolutions proceed from opinions; it is, therefore, at all times important to eradicate error before it produces unfortunate effects; it is in this warfare that I am engaged; and it is on that account, and on that only, that I call for support from those noblemen

who, from not having considered the case, have not honoured me with their protection.

What I now say is undeniable; but if, after fairly understanding this, there are noblemen who think the cause not worth pleading; * or who, thinking it worth pleading, are too selfish to join in its support. I shall consider it as a happy circumstance that the names of such men are not to be found in the honourable list of those who act on the generous principle of patrons to a publication, the object of which is to this claim—Were the claims to patronage (which I now bring forward) in any way attempted to be founded on the merit of the Work, it would be consummate and insufferable vanity; but as they are founded intirely on the beneficial tendency of the Work, and as that benefit is certain to be attained, I humbly hope that the appeal which I now make will be considered as legitimate.

* Some people imagine, that, because new nobility are rising up on the continent, the danger to the old is over—Quite the contrary.—Equality is indeed out of date, but upstart nobility in opposition to hereditary nobility, is now the plan encouraged, and approved by the revolutionists, and it is one to which the bulk of all mankind will assent, as it gives chance to the present race. Hereditary nobility is like a lottery, in which the prizes are already drawn.

COPY OF THE
DEDICATION
OF THE WORK TO
HIS MAJESTY,
BY PERMISSION.

TO
THE KING.

SIR,

IN presuming to lay before your Majesty a Work intended to illustrate the character generally maintained by the British Nobility; to shew the high respectability of that order, and combat the prejudices and false opinions that have prevailed in latter times, I am encouraged more by the nature of the subject than by any pretensions founded on my own abilities.

The fortitude with which your Majesty has resisted innovations, that are more inimical to the happiness of the people than to the rights of kings; the protection your Majesty has granted to the victims of a misguided nation and of a false philosophy; and the assistance afforded to all who are inclined to defend their rights, will excite admiration to the latest posterity.

Your Majesty's example will shew, that firmness in maintaining what is already established,

and has been approved by experience, in opposition to what is plausible and new, however much applauded by the popular voice, is the surest way for a monarch to secure the happiness of his people.

Britain, the seat of true liberty, which has for ages afforded an asylum to the victims of despotism, has, under the reign of your Majesty, become the refuge of those who have fled from a pretended liberty, founded on the imaginary basis of equality, and established on the ruins of hereditary nobility.

During a revolution, not less fatal to the men by whom it was planned and executed, than to those whom it proscribed, nations and individuals have sought, and they have found protection from your Majesty.

It is, as an humble assistant, to the best of my power, in resisting the farther progress of a revolution (in effecting which the pen has done as much as the sword), that I venture to hope for the patronage of a Monarch, whose reign has been as highly distinguished by his firmness and virtues, as by the singularity of the contest in which he has been compelled to engage.

I am,

SIR,

Your Majesty's most faithful subject,

And most dutiful Servant,

WILLIAM PLAYFAIR.

London, 1st May,
1809.

PREFACE

TO THE

ENGLISH PEERAGE.

(COPY.)

AT a time like the present, when there exists, nearly over all Europe, a very general and strong disposition to degrade whatever owes any part of its importance to ANTIQUITY, or whoever derives honour from ILLUSTRIOUS ANCESTORS, a publication of the nature now produced must appear with peculiar propriety and advantage. It plainly proves, from undeniable facts, found in the HISTORY OF THE BRITISH NOBILITY, that there has been, with a very few exceptions, a most intimate connexion between great actions, a good and virtuous conduct, and the honours that have been distributed by the sovereigns of this country.

This work, while it is designed to render the study of that interesting subject more easy and clear, by means of the Charts, is expressly in-

tended to counteract the new doctrines that unfortunately prevail too much.

The object is to convert the history of our ILLUSTRIOUS NOBILITY into a barrier against such unprincipled innovation ; and, on this ground, *it lays claim to the patronage and encouragement of all those who wish to maintain the present happy order of things, and the incompatible government of this country*, which are so intimately connected with the preservation of the different ranks of society, and so dependant on the respect and esteem justly marked for the higher orders.

THE NOBILITY of this empire are, by the nature of their creation and the descent in which their titles run, different from those of all other countries, and that difference is highly in favour of BRITISH NOBILITY.

From the earliest ages, genealogy has occupied much of the attention of mankind ; and whether we consult sacred, or profane history, we shall find the extraction of the individual always considered as making an important object in his history.

When a man first enters into life, he has, indeed, no other history than the name of his father, or of the family to which he belongs. This is the only answer which can be given to that perpetual question of, "Who is that?" No sooner do we see a stranger than we wish to

know from whom descended. The very important inquiry, of what he does? is in general a secondary question.

Although the actions of a man himself are the truest proofs of his merit, yet it is impossible for the mind not to connect these with the opinion we have of his extraction; and whoever pays due attention to the natural sentiments of mankind, (while he keeps clear of the absurd prejudice which gives honour and respect to extraction alone,) will acknowledge, that the actions of men are not the only ground of respectability or estimation in the world. It is true, that a respect for ancestors, seems to be founded in what (in the present times) is called prejudice, and respect for actions, on what is termed reason, but this is not altogether true.

It is to be considered, that the motive of a man's actions not being always known, and even the real merit of an act being frequently uncertain, it is in a vast variety of cases impossible to form a very decided conclusion. On the other hand, though it is absurd to honour and esteem a man merely because he is descended from great and good men, yet, even in doing so, reason mingles with prejudice; for, personal merit or blame cannot, in almost any case, be measured so accurately as not to require all the assistance which circumstances will afford in forming an opinion on

this subject; it becomes therefore necessary to take into account all the collateral circumstances; of which extraction is one.^a

In forming a judgment of great, or of very decided actions, the former conduct of the actor will produce but little effect; because men are capable of reformation, or of becoming depraved; but in judging of ordinary actions, the general character of the actor has much weight. In like manner, the race from which a man springs, is

^a Mr. Pope, who is considered as having put the ideas of others into admirable versification, seems to be entirely in favour of actions, when he says,

“Honour and shame from no condition rise,
Act well your part, there all the honour lies:
Worth makes the man; and want of it the fellow,
The rest is all but leather or prunella.”

This, indeed, is a very decided sort of language; but what are we to say, when in the following essay we find the same poet express himself thus?

“Not always actions shew the man: we find
Who does a kindness is not therefore kind:” &c.

And when farther on, the same poet, who in the foregoing essay spoke so decidedly of actions, concludes with saying:

“Judge we by nature? habit can efface,
Interest o’ercome, or policy take place.
By actions? those uncertainty divides.
By passions? these dissimulation hides.
Opinions? they still take a wider range.
Find, if you can, in what you cannot change.
Manners with fortunes, humours turn with climes,
Tenets with books, and principles with times.”

What a tissue of contradictions!!

a sort of guide to the judgement with respect to the man himself; until a man has begun to act, or until we know some of his actions or his manner of acting; the race he is descended from is the only circumstance that can guide our judgement. This, indeed, is by no means a sure criterion: but as a man's past conduct is not a perfectly certain pledge for his future actions, it becomes unfair altogether to reject the one, and in an unlimited manner to adopt the other mode of judging.

Lineal descent seems, from the history both of men and of inferior animals, to be an imperfect species of identity: the same qualities are often found to descend from father to son; and, therefore, may with some reason be expected to do so; and as even where the identity is personal and undeniable,^b the mind is capable of total change, it seems fair to consider this as a species of identity though of an inferior degree; provided we can find, that the qualities or propensities of the man do often, as personal likeness, go by descent.

^b The man who at the age of twenty-five was vigorous and virtuous, may at forty be depraved and debilitated; indeed it often happens so; nay, very great changes take place in a much shorter interval of time, therefore personal identity scarcely exists, except in the memory, for both the mind and matter are changed.

Without affirming that general opinion is always right, its support is a strong presumption in favour of any sentiment or doctrine. In speaking of general opinion, we do not mean *general* in one town or country, or only a temporary opinion, though ever so widely extended; but an opinion, of the truth of which, all ranks and ages, the ignorant man, and the well-informed, are equally persuaded; * such an opinion is, for the most part, well founded.

It is, and has been common to all people in all ages, to speak of a brave race of men; an honourable; or a generous race. Thousands of instances may be drawn from history to prove that there is nothing absurd in such expressions.^d Even whole nations have deserved and maintained

* There is indeed a difference between the degree of credit given by the well-informed man and the ignorant. What the former believes, is generally mixed with some degree of doubt, or attended with some species of diffidence (in himself at least); whereas the ignorant man indulges no sort of doubt, but grants a full, general, and unmixed belief to his opinion, unaccompanied by any sort of diffidence in his own judgment.

^d It is undoubtedly a mistake to attribute to soil, climate, or government, the disposition of the people. Under the same government we find people of very different characters and conduct. The people of Cheshire are very different from those of Yorkshire. The people of Normandy are remarkable for shrewdness, and those of Champagne for silliness; so that it is not the government. Again, is it local situation? Compare the ancient Romans with the

a particular character.* It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose, until we find it otherwise, that the individual partakes of the qualities of the line from which he is sprung.^f

To say, that some degree of prejudice is not mixed with this position in favour of a person who is well descended, would be extravagant: but it

base populace that now incumber Italy, or the antient Greeks with the slaves who now disgrace the former habitation of arts and elegance.

* It does not seem to be the same with the qualities of the head, for we do not hear of a succession of painters, poets, or mathematicians. This has given some reason to think that the qualities of the heart go by the male line, and those of the head by the female, which latter being subject to perpetual interruption, there is nothing hereditary in abilities. Where it has sometimes happened, that the same male and female line have intermarried for a long series of generations, the race has generally been degraded in intellects. Of this there are several examples in some parts of this country, which, however, it would be invidious to point out.

^f Perhaps the fair and honourable pride of emulating the virtues of ancestors, is one of the greatest recommendations of a man who is well descended. This acts strongly on youth, and therefore tends to make a man begin the world well, which is a great point; and on this account it is to be wished, that the old prejudices (if they are prejudices) in favour of men of family, should not be done away, to make room for modern philosophy.

is quite sufficient, if shewn that there is some foundation for it in nature, and in reason.

In maintaining, that respect and honour are due to ancestry, we do not by any means wish to insinuate that such claims are equal to those of personal merit, and indeed it is precisely *because we do not think so*, that we have set on foot the present enquiry into the origin of honours and of wealth, thereby connecting genealogy with biography; for we do consider that there is a wide distinction between honour and rank, and that a splendid title may, in some cases, be rather a disgrace than otherwise: but in all cases, we maintain that genealogy and biography ought to be connected together, in order to separate the solid from the shining, the intrinsic from the apparent.

In the course of the following enquiry, we shall find, that though honours have in general been acquired by estimable actions, there are a few glaring exceptions. We shall also find that, though once obtained, honours have often been well supported, yet that they have occasionally been very much disgraced and degraded, by the actions of those who bore them. This will naturally lead more firmly to the conclusion, that nominal rank and real honour may be, and frequently are separated.

As a rich man becomes almost equally mi-

portant to society as if, besides his riches, he were in possession of a title, and as a degree of respect paid to him is not very much inferior, we shall inquire into the origin of wealth, and the nature of that conduct, by which it is naturally acquired, as well as into that cast of character, and course of conduct, which do most naturally, and have most commonly, led to wealth and honours.

At the same time that the historical inquirer is under an indispensable obligation to search diligently for, and strictly adhere to the truth, it is yet permitted to him, nay, it is proper, wherever the motives for any action appear to be uncertain, to incline to that detail, or the explanation, which is most favourable to the family of which he treats: and this, on the fair ground, that vanity is a more powerful incentive to virtue than shame; the former is attended with an agreeable feeling, but the latter, with a very painful sensation. Desirous to gratify, as well as serve mankind, we will, without any sacrifice of truth, take what is familiarly termed the good-natured side of the question.

It would be a curious inquiry to trace the importance in which genealogy has been held in all ages, and in all nations; as it would tend to ascertain, how much more men are governed in their actions by opinion than by realities. The province of opinion seems to be to guide men, when they are not under the immediate influence of

necessity: but opinion yields its empire, the moment that circumstances are such as to create what appears to the mind to be necessity.^e

Inequality of rank owes its first rise to seniority; of this we have many beautiful descriptions in the Old Testament. The father of the family was the king, and his eldest son succeeded to his power, unless where the family separated, or where superior ingenuity or strength gave that power to another. It is, therefore, a fundamental error to imagine that equality is natural. Nothing in the world is so unnatural, and nothing more impracticable, than either to establish or preserve equality: though it be clear that a boundary must be set to power, and that this boundary ought to be regulated by justice, and by circumstances.^h

The eastern nations, which have escaped many of those convulsions and changes, which war

^e We say, what appears to be necessity: because it is very seldom that there is no alternative left: and so long as there is, the necessity is not absolute.

^h Nimrod seems to have been the first man who overturned the Patriarchial government, and established that of conquest; which he attained by personal merit, uniting in himself all those qualities of body and mind which fit a man to lead, govern, and instruct others: and what, at first sight, surprises us is that the superiority established by conquest, is of a milder species than that which is established by family preferences; but this seems to arise from the same cause that makes civil wars more cruel than those between two different nations.

and conquest have brought on Europe and Africa, retain still much of that primæval distinction of rank, which seems to have owed its origin to the function which the father of the family assigned to his different children; for that distinction seems to have been occasioned by opinion, or unequal degrees of affection, not by force; and to have had very little connexion either with state policy, or personal interest or advantage. Superstition came in aid of what arose from paternalⁱ injustice; and, accordingly, we find that in the east, one set of men is exalted above, and the other depressed below humanity.

In the western world, where revolutions, and the fiercer passions have ruled, men have sometimes been guided by justice, and when they were not so, by interest. Hence it is, that, though the distinction of master and slave existed for a long period, in Europe; yet it was a distinction

ⁱ The imperfections of humanity counteract and moderate each other in a wonderful degree. Avarice counteracts cruelty in the case of slaves. As to paternal authority, we have a strange instance of what that is, even in the patriarch Abraham, who sent off his beloved concubine, and her young son, into the desert, with a bottle of water, in order to please his old wife Sarah. Can we wonder at the degradation of some of the Eastern *casts*, after such an invidious distinction amongst children, made by so exemplary a man as Abraham?

founded upon a sort of social contract, though indeed a very unfair one. There was a species of reciprocal advantage, even between the master and the slave: but there is none between the different Casts in India; besides this, to be a slave was humiliating, but not accounted disgraceful: as distinction of ranks is then natural to man, it is ever to be considered as unavoidable. Hereditary title is, however, by no means very ancient, and though it may be politically wise, it is by no means necessary, it may therefore be considered as an artificial, though far from useless, division of society.

In the splendid days of Greece and Rome, many families were noble: but titles were personal, and attached only to offices. It is to the feudal system that we owe hereditary title.^k

Things always exist before their names. Thus it is that rank and honour existed long before titles, which were only a species of alphabet, or hieroglyphical signs, by which rank is ascertained and represented. The lineal descendants of Scipio Africanus would have enjoyed the first titles in Rome, if there had been any in that great city; as it was, they enjoyed all that rank

^k Though the nobility of Rome had three names, this was not an hereditary title, but a customary distinction. See note A, at the end of the Preface.

which opinion gives, and which a title only indicates.

There cannot be a doubt, that the invention of titles is an improvement in the social system; particularly when accompanied with the restrictions and regulations generally attended to in England, where the eldest of the family alone has been considered as noble, and enjoys the privileges attached to nobility, because it prevents that increase of nobless which takes place, where titles extend to the whole family; the evil consequences of which, to society, are very considerable.

As men live by industry, the great number ought not to be fettered with any imaginary rank that tends to interrupt those pursuits which are necessary to their existence and the maintenance of their families; and, again, as honours and titles are intended as rewards from the public to individuals, they should not become too common, or be possessed by poor or needy men, for though poverty is not in itself any reproach, and is, in some instances, very honourable, yet it does not, in any case, accord well with rank and title.

In France there were about seventeen thousand noble families, because nobility was attached to all the males of the line; but, as wealth is not divisible in the same manner, many of the nobles were extremely poor, and not capable of

maintaining their rank; so that, in many cases, it became ridiculous, and in a still greater number, very inconvenient. If it had not been, that the younger sons were many of them provided for in the church, which prevented them from marriage, it is impossible to say to what a ruinous extent nobility might have been communicated in that country.

In England, the direct line in which the title is to go, is always pointed out in the patent by which the title is granted, which prevents the increase of noble families, and extinguishes the nobility in a great number of instances, as the line pointed out ceases to exist.

Whether that equality of condition which has of late been so loudly contended for, would be more agreeable to the order of nature, or more conducive to the happiness and prosperity of mankind, was for some time doubtful, but it is no longer so now, since the French have made an experiment which has proved, that equality, in respect either to rank or fortune, is impracticable.

A state of perfect equality could subsist only amongst men possessing equal talents and equal virtues; but there are not men in any country of such a description.

Equality of condition must be founded on equality of moral and physical means; but as nature has endowed men very differently in

those respects, it follows that equality of condition cannot possibly be maintained, and is contrary to the nature and rights of things.

Were all mankind perfectly virtuous, an artificial distinction of ranks would be unnecessary: but in that case civil government itself would likewise be unnecessary, because men would have attained all that perfection which it is intended, by the regulations of society, only imperfectly to obtain; but even then there would not be equality with respect to wealth, which is the consequence of talents and exertion.

In studying the consequences that arise to men from the different situations which they are by birth destined to fill, it will at once occur to the most unthinking, that whilst honours and affluence rescue a man from the temptation to meanness or criminality, they likewise deprive him of those motives for exertion that are felt by people in an inferior situation. With equal abilities and equal inclination, the exertions of men are different when left free, and when acted upon by necessity; and it is for this reason clear, that the greatest actions must be performed by men who have either been born to encounter difficulty, or have by indiscretion created difficulties to overcome.

History is full of instances of the former. The latter are more rare, but still they are to be found in sufficient numbers to confirm the

opinion, that great exertions are never made but when called forth by great occasion.

Prepared, then, as every one must be, not to expect in noblemen of large fortunes those exertions that first raised their ancestors, and similar to such as are raising their cotemporaries; yet still there are other reasons why the nobility of this country are precluded from often performing brilliant actions.

The SENATE, the ARMY, the NAVY, the CHURCH, the BAR, and COMMERCE, or some PROFESSION, are the ways in which the talents of men may be exerted; to those we have but one other to add, that of ambassadors, or negotiators, representing their sovereign in a foreign country.

By the constitution of this country, the most important department in the senate is only open to men who are NOT peers. Peers are shut out entirely from the church, the bar, and from commerce, and every professional pursuit, so that their talents are, in a manner, confined to diplomatic exertion, the field of which is very narrow.

This consideration will explain many phenomena (as they may be termed), or, in other words, explain many facts that otherwise would lead us to think that wealth and honours are seldom accompanied with talents or energy: whereas the fact is, that talents and energy are

not called out except by necessity; and when they are called out, the field of action for peers is very narrow and circumscribed.

Into the NAVY men of fortune cannot be expected to enter. It is a sort of life not to be encountered but by men whose situation and circumstances oblige them to adopt a profession in which, by exertion, they may hope to rise from mediocrity to affluence; but there is no inducement for a man already of rank and fortune to enter into such a way of life, neither would it be for the advantage of the service that they should do so, and consequently they are not encouraged to do it.

With the army the case is somewhat different.

Into that, the first nobleman in the land may enter and obtain rank, but then he is placed in opposition to men who are spurred on both by ambition and necessity, and who, of a natural consequence, must in general make greater exertions.

We are not then to be surprised that, whilst many of the old nobility remain stationary as to rank, new men rise up who were unknown a few years before. The world can only be said to be fairly before men who have obtained sufficient education to enable them to display their abilities, and who are pressed on by ambition and necessity, without being shackled by rank.¹

¹ Of this there are many instances in our own days, and two very striking ones in the families of Murray and Erskine.

We are not then to wonder that the nobility should have a different sort of character from men who have not attained rank and title. A difference of characters arises necessarily from a difference of situations.

We shall find, in the course of this work, that honour and good conduct are the general characteristics of the British nobility; and we shall take occasion to notice the votes of the house of peers upon remarkable occasions, where the members act in a body, and shew the general spirit by which they are animated.

There can be no doubt but that good or great actions are in general those by which honours

Lord Mansfield was the younger brother of Lord Stormont, and by his exertions at the bar raised himself to greater rank and affluence than the chief of the family, so that the ancient title of Stormont is absorbed in the newly-acquired one of Mansfield.

The present Lord Erskine is of a very ancient family. His father, Lord Buchan, was a man of abilities, and so is his elder brother; but where was the field on which they could exercise their abilities?

We might find many similar examples, but it is not to be expected that those who rise are always to be relatives of men already risen. Lord Thurlow, and all the law lords, were in the same situation with Lord Erskine. They had a field for their talents, and they rose. Nearly all the peers in the kingdom are in the same situation with Lords Stormont and Buchan, and having no field for action they remain stationary.

are acquired, and though the mercantile spirit is sometimes carried to an extreme, and becomes allied with habits and propensities not altogether either to be loved or admired, yet, it is certain and undeniable that probity, regularity, and industry, form the basis of the character of him who obtains wealth, or honour.

As the charts with which this work is accompanied shew the line of succession with a distinctness hitherto unexampled in this branch of study, so it will lead the mind to reflections that have not heretofore occurred, and, in order that these reflections may be the more easily formed, we shall make some observations.

In proportion as the rank was high, in former times, the nobility were liable to be involved in political disturbances ; so that of the rank of duke we have only two created before the last of the civil wars, and of marquises we have only one ; whereas of barons we have nineteen, seven of whom maintained themselves during all the disturbances between the houses of York and Lancaster.

When we consider this, we cannot help searching for the cause ; nor in looking for it can we fail to find it, or remain any longer astonished that the highest nobility are not the most ancient ; neither can we wonder that many private gentlemen can trace their families in a respectable line longer than many of the nobility, for the former

are by their situation skreened from the violence of those revolutions that overturn the latter.^m

Add to these, the failure of issue in the direct line, or in that pointed out by the patent of creation, and we shall not be surprised that there are not greater numbers of the ancient nobility now existing.

Though it does not enter into the plan of this work to give a minute history of families before they were ennobled, yet care has been taken to trace them as far back as can be done with certainty, and with that regard to brevity which the nature of the work requires.

It has been considered as necessary to give a short account of heraldry, and the devices employed by it, together with the manner in which they are arranged; and that is attempted in a way

^m The Earl of Arundel (by right Duke of Norfolk) said to Robert Lord Spencer in 1621, in the House of Lords, ‘When those things happened, my lord, your ancestors were keeping sheep;’ ‘and yours,’ replied Spencer, ‘were hatching treason.’ This indicates, in a very plain, and natural manner, the situation of great men. No family was ever more free from hatching treason than that of Howard, yet the first duke had been attainted, even after death, for the very actions by which he acquired his rank, and his successors suffered repeatedly without a cause. The author of this work was particularly intimate with the Baron de Batz (a French gentleman who wrote a work of great merit relative to French families) who said that few noble families could be traced farther back than the tenth century.

different from what has yet been done, and such as, it is expected, will be found to be easily understood and recollected; for the greatest difficulty in studying heraldry, is recollecting names when there is no association of ideas to preserve the connexion between the things represented, and the signs or emblems used to represent them.

The contrivance of altering the appellation of a colour from the name of a metal, when speaking of a commoner's arms, to that of a gem when speaking of a nobleman, and to that of one of the heavenly bodies when speaking of a sovereign, produces great confusion.

This confusion we have endeavoured to remove in some degree, by explaining the thing in as simple a way as possible; and we hope in this, as in the rest, our labours will be found satisfactory and useful to those who have had the goodness to patronise and protect the work, which we trust will be found to be a fair and proper attempt to prove the advantage of nobility, and silence the clamours of those who cry out against it; clamours founded on ignorance or vanity; of a very injurious tendency, and hitherto passed over with too much indifference. (Note B, end of Preface.)

Without having the smallest intention or wish to find fault with, or condemn the books of peerage that have hitherto been published, we must be permitted to say, that throughout the whole there runs

a confusion and intricacy that baffle the efforts of the most attentive, and elude the memory that is the strongest and most retentive.

Nothing renders it so difficult to retain facts as a loose arrangement. What may properly be termed the *family history* of a man; that is to say, whom he married, and who were his children, brothers, sisters, &c. has so little connexion with his transactions as a man whose history merits attention, that it seems best to keep them entirely separate. If they are not kept so, the order of time must be broke through, or both the narratives intermixed in a very confused manner.

It is for this reason that we first give the title, then the times of creation, and, lastly, the pedigree; in all which we are confined to common routine, and can neither add with advantage to, or diminish without injury, from what is to be found in the ordinary books of peerage.

Separate from that, we give such actions, anecdotes, and facts, as mark the characters of those persons whose pedigrees we have already given with care and correctness, adding such reflections as naturally and properly arise, for this is the great use of all historical research, whether applied to the affairs of nations or of individuals.

It has been a practice approved and esteemed, and very generally adopted, ever since the days of Æsop, to invent tales from which moral reflections

might arise : how inexcusable then must it be to let the opportunity pass away of grounding proper lessons on real occurrences.

We wish this thing to be understood in its true light, and not considered as arising from any desire to moralize and reason, merely from a propensity to do so ; but we beg our readers, and in particular the nobility themselves, to consider that our purpose is to shew the utility of hereditary nobility, as having a happy influence on the peace and security of mankind.

Whilst we are writing, one of the strongest examples in illustration of this, that history furnishes, has occurred, to the astonishment of all Europe.

- By an ephemeral and newly created nobility, the despotic ruler of France has contrived to invade, in a most unjustifiable, treacherous, and cruel manner, the liberties of Spain, and the old hereditary nobility of that once great country have been found its surest support. Let those who will talk of the energy and abilities of new men risen to a height in a time of trouble and desolation, we only see in them the scourges of mankind ; but we find in the *moderation*, the attachment to *principle*, the *love of honour*, the idea of dignity, connected with, and naturally arising from, illustrious ancestry, that safeguard, that peace-preserver, on which the people can best depend in a time of trouble and difficulty.

In France it has become the fashion to ridicule birth and ancestry, and men are proud of having risen from the lowest situation. We have seen a prince of the blood reject the name of Bourbon, and take the ludicrous title of Equality. We have seen him deny his royal father, and claim the honour of being descended from a menial servant's criminal intercourse with an adulterous and degraded mother. But though, by a sort of sophism of a nature fit to captivate the majority, it might appear that the man who raises himself deserves the most honour, let us consider whether encouraging that belief is most for the general advantage; for that is the purpose—that is the great end.

Endeavouring to set that in its true light, we find that whilst France respected hereditary nobility she was tolerably free and tolerably happy, probably as much so as the nature of things admits, taking into account the levity and impetuosity of the people. We find, also, that since she has enjoyed the advantage of those new and energetic chiefs who have risen from nothing, she has become at once an object of pity, a spectacle of horror, and the scourge of mankind. We find still farther, that those very upstarts, those men of yesterday, are the active and un pitying instruments of evil. Is it possible to say more against upstarts, or more in favour of an ancient and hereditary nobility?

There is a degree of moderation and equanimity to be found in persons who are born to

rank and affluence, that is not to be found amongst men who in England are termed upstarts, and in France *les parvenues*; and though that moderation may sometimes be considered as apathy or indifference, yet it is of great importance that there should be one class of men in the country who have a share in the legislation, and who are so far removed from the ordinary embarrassments of life as to look on with coolness, when others are too much heated and actuated by personal interests.

The nobility of this country are to be considered in a double light; first, as individuals; and next, as constituting one of the branches of the legislature.

In the first point of view we have already spoken of them, we shall now consider them as a constitutional body, and in that light we shall see that they are not only, by the circumstances in which they are placed, calculated to render the government and constitution more perfect than it otherwise would be, but that the elective representative commons' house, without such a controul, would be dangerous.

From the history of our own country, we find that the fire and impetuosity of the commons have been resisted, repeatedly with advantage, by the house of peers, and that at all times it has been kept in check; and though it may be that in many common affairs the house of lords acts rather in a passive manner, yet in cases of importance it has done great service.

The house of lords, in money bills, has a controlling power only, and in most others acts rather as a regulator than as the original moving principle ; and if on every occasion it were to display a mistrust of the house of commons, by canvassing ordinary questions with great eagerness, it would lead in time to a jealousy that would disturb and impede public business, and be attended with no practical utility whatever. By reserving itself for important occasions, the upper house becomes that check and balance so necessary for the preservation of good government.

Both during the civil wars, and in times of tranquillity, the house of peers has been of great service, by the wisdom, the moderation, and dignity of its proceedings ; and if there is any fault to be found in its composition, it is owing to the great preponderance of law lords where legal questions occur.

This imperfection in the house of peers is, however, rather to be considered as an argument in favour of the order of nobility than otherwise, for the evil does not arise from any of the members as peers, but as lawyers, who have a much greater sway than, according to their numbers, they ought to have;ⁿ for the very essence of every deliberative

ⁿ On a bill connected with any reform in the courts of justice, or in the regulation of legal affairs, two or three judges sway the whole house, and generally carry the question. This is a great evil, though, perhaps, it might be difficult to find a safe remedy : it were to be wished that peers who are not of

body is that opinions should be unbiassed. It is an imperfection attached to the nature of things, that opinions are not upon an equality like votes. A judge has but one vote; but, on a law

the law would exert their own understanding on such occasions, and not conceive that law lords only are competent. Law lords no doubt understand the subject best; but when a reform of abuses is the object, they do not feel perhaps so impartially as other lords.

A body of nobility is peculiarly necessary in our mixed and compound constitution, in order to support the rights both of the crown and of the people, by forming a barrier to withstand the encroachments of either. It creates and preserves that gradual scale of dignity, which proceeds from the peasant to the prince; rising like a pyramid from a broad foundation, and diminishing to a point as it rises. It is the ascending and contracting proportion that adds stability to any government; for when the departure is sudden from one extreme to another, we may pronounce the durability to be precarious. The nobility are as pillars, reared from among the people, more immediately to support the throne, of which the people are the basis; and, if the pillars fall, the whole becomes a ruin. Accordingly when, in the last century, the commons had determined to extirpate monarchy, they also voted the house of lords to be useless and dangerous. And since titles of nobility are thus expedient in the state, it is also expedient that their owners should form an independent and separate branch of the legislature. If they were confounded with the mass of the people, and like them had only a vote in electing representatives, their privileges would soon be borne down and overwhelmed by the popular torrent, which would effectually level all distinctions. It is therefore highly necessary that the body of nobles should have a distinct assembly, distinct deliberations, and distinct rights.

question, his bare opinion will carry perhaps fifty without examination.

To return from this short digression (from the immediate object of this work), the history of France in the present, and of our own country in former times, prove that a house of peers is essential to the perfection of a mixed, and even of a purely monarchical, government.

The unfortunate revolution of France would probably never have taken place as it did, had not a mistaken minister absorbed the influence of the nobility or peers, at the meeting of the states-general in that of the commons or tiers-etat.*

The consequences of this measure were fatal and immediate, and though it is beyond human power

* Formerly the numbers of clergy, nobles, and tiers-etat, were equal at the states-general, and each assembly voted by itself, and could maintain its rights; but Necker, that republican minister, contrived a new arrangement, by giving the tiers-etat a double representation, or as many members as the other two orders; that is, six hundred of the former, and three hundred of each of the latter.

Necker, one of the vainest of men, seeking popularity, and at the same time a great lover of innovation, undoubtedly saw, that if each order voted by itself, the balance would still be kept up, whether the numbers were thirty or three thousand; but he also saw, that there was an incongruity in diminishing the number and preserving the importance, and therefore the question of voting (*par tête et non par ordre*) individually, and not according to their order, was a natural conse-

to know what would have happened if this had not been done, yet the overthrow of the government as it did take place can be traced to that cause; indeed it was foreseen what would be the consequence. The minister who advised the measure can only be esteemed an honest man, on the supposition that he was ignorant of the consequences. We may all remember the violence of an assembly composed of men without any controul or check. Perhaps, between the action of mind and matter, a more fair and true comparison cannot be made, than in likening the assembly, when

quence. To facilitate this, the tiers-etat were assembled in a large and elegant hall, sufficient to allow a great number of spectators, so that great interest was inspired by their discussions; while the clergy and nobles were put into small apartments, where the auditors were but few, for want of space. The Duke of Orleans, and a few more factious nobles, proposed uniting all in one assembly; public enthusiasm applauded the idea, and in a moment the French nobility were no longer a class apart. In less than a year nobility was abolished by law, and in little more than three years royalty followed!! Liberty and peace were fled, and Robespierre and his monsters hovered over the fields of France, which were stained with blood, and whitened with the bones of their victims. That miserable country has been obliged to seek a miserable repose under a very rigorous and usurped authority, which finds it necessary to re-establish religion, and divide society once more into different ranks and orders; thereby declaring the utility of those establishments which the first revolutionists were so eager to abolish, and which other nations ought to be so careful to preserve.

that check was taken away, to a time-piece, that runs down when deprived of the balance-wheel. The rapidity of the movement is fifty times that of a regular and right motion, and it goes on till the strength fails; and thus it was with the states-general.

From the first moment that the nobility, (decoyed over by Orleans and a number more of the revolutionary chiefs), sunk themselves in a general assembly, every thing went rapidly to ruin. The assembly, that at first commanded every thing, soon run itself down like the time-piece, and became the tool of the factious, and the abject servant of the clubs, who gave it over, bound, into the hands of Robespierre and his successors of the directory, from whom it fell to the present emperor. Still it is an assembly without any sort of energy in itself, but serving as an instrument by which oppression and despotic power exert themselves with a greater degree of conveniency and advantage.

The Roman patricians were hereditary nobility, though without titles; and whilst their preponderance in the state was maintained, the people preserved their liberties; but liberty did not long outlive the controlling power of the nobles.*

It would be very easy to prove, if this were

* The senate continued to meet till the last days even of the decline of the empire, but it was but a mere shadow. The first

a proper place for entering upon that subject, that the house of peers is the preserver of British liberty, which could not long exist without it; and accordingly it was of no importance during the civil wars or the arbitrary government of Cromwell, and it did not rise to have its full weight till the happy revolution that placed King William on the throne.

The multiplication of books, as well as the materials that accumulate to form historical report, or assist philosophical or political inquiry, render it desirable in all cases to be as short as is consistent with accuracy, and to convey what is intended to

shock to the liberties of Rome, was when factious men, whether patricians or not, under the favours of the people, became consuls and generals, and obtained all places of authority and power. The French did, with rapidity, what the Romans did by slow degrees: but the same thing took place in both countries.

It is an opinion not uncommon, and at least plausible, that the nobility of a well-regulated state is the best security against monarchical despotism, on the one hand; and the confusion of democratic insolence, on the other. Self-interest is the most powerful principle in the human breast; and it is obviously the interest of nobility to preserve that balance of power in society upon which the very existence of their order depends. Corrupted as the present age confessedly is, a very recent instance could be given, in which the British house of peers rescued at once the sovereign and the people from the threatened tyranny of a factious junto.

be conveyed with the least possible labour and trouble, and the greatest attainable perspicuity ; we shall not, therefore, enlarge on the subject, as we think quite enough has been said to prove the advantages, in a political view, of hereditary nobility, their respectability as to origin, and the impossibility of equality.

There is but one more observation of any importance that occurs on the subject, although a volume might easily be written upon it (and to good purpose), which is, that titles and hereditary rank are peculiarly advantageous in a mercantile country, in so far as they go a considerable length towards counteracting that respect for wealth, which in the absence of hereditary rank by establishment, would take place, and which tends to degrade a nation.¹

But it is in vain to have distinction, rank, and titles, if they are not supported by public opinion. Mr. Hume observes, with truth, "That government is founded only on opinion, and that this opinion is of two kinds ; opinion of interest, and opinion of right. When a people are persuaded that it is their

¹ The Dutch republic consisted of merchants. It was short-lived, and, though respected, was always in some degree despised for a sort of groveling, mercenary character. The Venetian republic consisted of nobility amalgamated with mercantile men. It existed longer than any other government in Europe ever did, and even when it lost its power, preserved a degree of splendid dignity that rendered it respectable. It did not fall like Holland.—Venice fell clean.

interest to support the government under which they live, that government must be very stable ; but among the worthless and unthinking part of the community this persuasion has seldom place. All men however have a notion of rights, of a right to property, and a right to power ; and when the majority of a nation considers a certain order of men as having a right to that eminence in which they are placed, this opinion, call it prejudice or what we will, contributes much to the peace and happiness of civil society. There are many, however, who think otherwise, and imagine that ‘ the society in which the greatest equality prevails must always be secure.’ These men conceive it to be the business of a good government to distribute, as equally as possible, those blessings which bounteous nature offers to all.

It may readily be allowed that this reasoning is conclusive ; but the great question returns, ‘ How far can equality prevail in a society which is secure ? and what is possible to be done in the equal distribution of the blessings of nature ? Till these questions be answered, we gain nothing by declaiming on the rights and equality of men : and the answers which have sometimes been given to them suppose a degree of perfection in human nature, which, if it were real, would make all civil institutions useless. If opinion is essentially necessary to the maintenance of any human institution, it is most so for the support of nobility ; for without esteem and considera-

tion, what are rank and title? As to the few privileges attached to the peerage, they are more than counterbalanced by the disadvantages, incapacities, and inconveniences attendant on it; so that take away the support of opinion, and what is now an honour would be a burden to bear.

The express intention of this work, as has already been said, is to set public opinion right; in doing which, we think we shall render a service to mankind at large, and most particularly to our own country.

Baronets are hereditary nobility, without the privileges of peers; for though we conceive the number of peers in this country to be great, it was proved hereafter exceedingly small, and is confined and limited by the circumstance of the great political inconvenience of having a great number of members in the house.

The creation of baronets arose naturally from the circumstance that political expediency set bounds to the number of peers; but no natural limit being set to the number of persons who might deserve distinction from the sovereign, baronets were created in 1610, who are, to all intents and purposes, nobility, enjoying rank, but without privilege; it is for that reason, that this work is extended to the baronetage of the United Kingdom.

Notes.

NOTE A. ORIGIN OF HEREDITARY NOBILITY.

The celebrated civilian, Francis Hotomon, who was one of the most learned men of his age, gives us the cause of making hereditary the order of nobility in France. In this work, entitled *Franco Gallia*, which is now very scarce, written in the year 1574, he says,

“ We must not omit making mention of the cunning device made use of by Hugh Capet, for establishing himself in his new dominion [of King of France, anno 987]. For, whereas all the magistracies and honours of the kingdom, such as dukedoms, earldoms, &c. had been hitherto, from ancient times, conferred upon select and deserving persons in the general conventions of the people, and were held only during good behaviour, whereof (as the lawyers express it) they were but beneficiaries. Hugh Capet, in order to secure to himself the affections of the great men, was the first that made those honours perpetual which were formerly but temporary: and ordained, that such as obtained them should have an hereditary right in them, and might leave them to their children.—Of this, see Franciscus Conanus, the civilian, *Comment ii. chap. ix.*’

It is singular, that this fact has escaped the notice of most of the French historians.

NOTE B.

The late Lord Chesterfield is not the only instance of a peer who, with the vanity of a coxcomb and the levity of a school-boy, has attempted to throw ridicule on the order of nobility by mentioning the house of lords with disrespect.

Lord Chesterfield was so much of a fashionable man, that what he said had generally more weight than worth.

He often attempted to display his wit by pretending a contempt for the peerage to which he belonged, and to which it was his great pride to belong, in order to be considered a man of genius ; but we shall shew, that though many peers have excelled his lordship in genius, but few surpassed him in vanity, and fewer still have been at so much pains to degrade nobility in public opinion.

That lord lived at the time when it had become fashionable for peers to laugh at nobility, and clergymen to ridicule religion, and when also some crowned heads joined the philosophers in preparing the road for the overthrow of their descendants, by degrading the established orders of society in the eyes of the multitude. As the result has been so fatal to all parties, it is to be hoped that for the future men who are exalted, will at least not take pains to degrade themselves, for it was by such things the French brought ruin on their country.

Amongst others of the French nobility who aspired at the character of men of wit and genius, and of philosophers, and who gloried in the name of simple citizen, was the Marquis de Vilette, who had espoused, maltreated, and neglected, the famous Belle et Bonne, the adopted daughter of Voltaire. This unworthy and contemptible nobleman, just as the revolution was beginning was passing an act before a notary, who had stiled him in the preamble as the High and Powerful Marquis de Vilette. The marquis read the preamble, and turning to the notary with an affected serious air, told him that he thought he would not allow falsehoods to be written in his office, that he was neither high nor powerful, but that he must stile him the Little and Feeble Charles.

Is it to be wondered, when nobles act so, that the inferiors should refuse to grant them respect, but rather unite to abolish an order which appears, even to those who belong to it, to be contemptible?

CONCLUSION
OF THE
ENGLISH PEERAGE ;

Shewing, from facts, the individual merit and general utility of the orders—That the Nobles have constantly watched over the liberties of the People, the foundation of which they laid in the time of King John, and established at the accession of William and Mary The utility of hereditary nobility, as a balance in the state, and the necessity of that order having the support of public opinion, which alone gives it stability—To which are added some remarks relating to this Publication.

HAVING now accomplished the first portion of the task which I undertook, by giving an account of the noble families of English peers, it becomes necessary to inquire into the result, and see whether the conclusion that I at first announced and expected, is fairly to be drawn from the materials that are laid before the Public.

From the beginning of the undertaking, I expected to be able to prove, that the British nobility (in proportion to their numbers and duration,)

had produced an uncommonly great number of characters eminent for talents and virtue. I expected that the result of the whole would be such, as by indisputable facts would prove the reality of what I had long wished to demonstrate ; for I was fully sensible, that an opinion had gone abroad, in almost every nation in Enrope, that noble families in general owed their first elevation to rank to the favour or caprice of monarchs ; and that their descendants, instead of being equal, were inferior to the other classes of society, both in talents and in virtue.

If I should appear to make some repetitions in what I am about to say, I beg the reader to consider that I am summing up the evidence on a highly important subject, which is very intimately connected with the happiness and peace of mankind ; and that it is much better to make myself clearly understood, even at the risk of being prolix, than to express loosely what I have to say on that important subject. I aim at accuracy, as well as at truth ; and I appeal to fact, leaving opinion, in the first instance, out of the question, and meaning to establish my point without the aid of argument.

I observe again then, that it was a prevailing opinion that noble families, in general, have owed their first elevation to favouritism, the caprice of monarchs, or to court intrigue, rather than to merit ; and that their descendants have been, for the most part, inferior to other ranks in society, both in talents and virtue.

Those prevailing opinions, though intimately connected with the general merits of nobility, are separate from each other, inasmuch as the one applies only to *personal nobility*, and the other to hereditary nobility (by establishment); the latter of which is the most obnoxious to those who exclaim against nobility in general. In opposition to those vague and ill-founded opinions, my business is to prove by facts;

FIRST, That very few of the British nobility have owned their elevation to favour, but to merit in the first instance; which no doubt gained them favour, as it ought to do; for men who have rendered service to the state, merit favour. That is, however, a species of favour totally different from what is generally meant by the word, which implies, as used by historians, and in common language, favourites merely because they are personally agreeable to the monarch.*

SECOND, That their descendants, that is, persons born to enjoy hereditary rank, have in this kingdom produced far more than the general, or usual proportion, of men of merit and talents; and that

* I am precluded from elucidating this point, by recent examples, owing to the impossibility of doing it, without making comparisons that would be improper and disagreeable. It is sufficient to say, that good generals and admirals, or able lawyers, naturally enjoy royal favour; but to call such *favourites*, according to the usual acceptation of the term, would be highly improper.

therefore, the opinion that is unfavourable to that class of society, is founded in error, and contradicted by fact.

Such are the two simple and plain objects of my work ; and I here must observe, that the facility of proving what I have in view, is infinitely greater than I had the smallest idea of. It will not require any nice calculation ; it will not be proved by any inconsiderable balance in favour of the conclusion ; it will be established in the most complete manner, so as not to admit of a doubt : in one word, it will be found, that instead of producing an equal number of men of abilities, the nobility produce more than four times the general, or usual proportion.

I mean to say, expressly and explicitly, that amongst the nobility, taking the present noble families from their original rise to rank till the present day, there are more than four times the number of meritorious characters than there are amongst men in general.

It would not be fair to found this comparison on the general population of a country, but a criterion may be easily discovered, to the fairness of which, no one will be able with justice to object.

Taking the period of existence of all the noble families now extant in England, from the time of their creation to the present day, and adding them together, the whole does not amount quite to one single line of thirty thousand years. Again, taking each generation on an average at twenty years,

(which is rather under than above the time that each individual peer may be considered to enjoy his rank and title,) there have not been more than fifteen hundred individual noblemen in England from the end of the twelfth century to the present day!!*

This number is probably far under what is generally supposed, for people are very unaccustomed to calculations in numbers on such subjects; and therefore their notions are very vague, and generally very far from the truth.

Not one-tenth of the lands in England are in possession of noblemen; and as they are in general the greatest proprietors, it is certain that there are fifty proprietors that are not noble for one that is noble.

Deducting one half for small proprietors, who are not supposed to be men of education, there will still remain twenty-five commoners who have estates sufficient to maintain the rank of gentlemen for one nobleman; that is to say, there are in England 6500 gentlemen of landed property, (there being 300 nobles) who having obtained good education, are personally on an equality with the nobility, so as to have the same opportunity of distinguishing themselves.

* It would be very easy to have given the exact number of noblemen that have actually enjoyed titles, but that would not be so satisfactory a mode as that I have adopted, because I could not make the same statement with regard to those ranks with whom I mean to compare the nobility. This number does not include the extinct peerages.

Going back only for three hundred years, and taking those gentlemen at twenty years, that gives ninety-seven thousand during that period.

As there are nearly 10,000 parishes in England, it will be fair to estimate the number of well-educated clergymen who enjoy leisure and affluence at 8,000; which, in the same period of three hundred years, gives 120,000 well-educated men.

The proprietors of funded and other property we shall not attempt to calculate, though their number is very great, and it would be perfectly fair to take them, and all men who have a good education, and are not constantly occupied with the routine of business, into the account. All men who have received a good education, and are above want, have an opportunity of displaying their talents, if they have any, as well as the nobility of the country, and certainly to reckon them at 20,000 is not too much; the account will then stand thus:

Proprietors of Land who are not Noble,

<i>but enjoy</i> affluence and leisure	- - - - -	6500
Clergymen, professors at universities, &c.	-	8000
Monied men, physicians, and professional men		
of all sorts, who enjoy ease and affluence	-	5500
		<hr/>
		20,000
		<hr/>

The number, in fact, is more than double what I

have calculated it to be, but it is better not to advance any thing that is doubtful; now as there has been a succession of such persons, as well as of nobility, in 300 years the number would be 300,000; and of the nobility there have only been 1500: that is to say, for one nobleman there have been two hundred men of education, who have enjoyed ease, and the means of exerting and displaying their genius, full as well as noblemen, and in many cases with advantage; for, as has been very truly explained in the preface to this work, noblemen are greatly limited in the exertion of their talents, and not a small portion of their time and attention is employed in filling that conspicuous place in society which it has fallen to their lot to occupy.

In arts and science, as men of learning, talents and genius, the nobility may then be expected to furnish only ONE; for every two hundred men of learning, talents, and genius, to be found amongst those men who enjoy ease, and have got good education, but who are not noble.

The proportion of two hundred to one is so unequal, that we could scarcely expect, according to the aggregate talents of this country, many men of genius or talents in the lesser number, yet we find some of the most distinguished men in every line belong to the class of the nobility; STATESMEN, WARRIORS, MEN OF LETTERS, CHEMISTS, MECHANICS, and men of INVENTIVE GENIUS in every way.

It will be seen in a note below,* that their number is considerable ; which to avoid speaking personally, it is necessary to give in a general way, without producing individual examples. If there are ninety-two distinguished noblemen, there ought to be sixteen thousand, equally distinguished, from amongst the other classes of the easy and affluent to whom we have alluded ; but there are not, from the days of civilization, one fourth part of the number.

But what is more remarkable still, is, that if we deduct from inventors, and men of genius, all those belonging to the nobility, the greater portion of those that remain are not found amongst men who enjoy ease and affluence, but amongst men struggling with necessity, whose genius has broken through every difficulty, and displayed itself.

The nobility have then far outstripped men of fortune and affluence, but who do not enjoy rank and title, which is all that it is necessary to prove : for they cannot properly be compared with men born under the influence of necessity, who are obliged to exert

* Military and naval officers of distinguished talents	29
Statesmen	33
Learned men, mathematicians, &c.	17
Inventors, &c.	13

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This only takes in men really distinguished above others, but if the names were given, it would lay a foundation for perpetual controversy ; the very thing I wish to avoid.

industry, but who are for the most part prevented from a display of genius, which they have not the means of cultivating. The circumstances under which these two classes of persons are found, are such, that a comparison could not fairly be made. Every affluent man has means and opportunity to cultivate his genius, if he chuses to do so. The man of pain and toil has necessity to spur him on, but he generally wants opportunity. It is, however, amongst those two dissimilar and opposite classes of society, that we find the greatest talents and genius; and we find the least where there are wealth and affluence without rank.*

If a conclusion can in any case be drawn with certainty, it is to be learnt from this, that elevation of rank, by occasioning emulation or ambition, is the

* It is to be observed, I do not mean the lower order of labourers, or mechanics, but that rank of men who have been properly bred to business, got some education, and at the same time are compelled to labour for existence. Such men are very frequently employed on works for which they have no genius, or works where genius has no means of shewing itself. Though nothing will hinder genius occasionally from breaking out, yet circumstances certainly often do prevent it. Where men are prudent, where genius is very great, it breaks through all difficulties, and finds its place like a fluid. Nature made Herschel an astronomer, and he broke through all difficulties, to gratify his disposition: and the same is, in a lesser degree, the case with most men of a particular turn of genius, which they will gratify at the risk of want, and in the face of every difficulty.

occasion of the exertion of talents, which, if every circumstance but the rank were the same, would lie dormant.

This proves what was asserted in the first prospectus, and in the preface to the work, that the recollection of ancestors that have been great men, has a tendency to excite also to great actions: or to speak directly to the point;—take a number of affluent men, who have estates, WITHOUT TITLES, and an equal number who have estates, WITH TITLES, and we shall find that the latter will be the most distinguished for their abilities.

It appears then clearly, from what has been laid before the public, that individual noblemen, so far from being inferior to other men in abilities, talents, and genius, have been superior to the only persons with whom they can be assimilated or compared.

It now remains to say something of the nobility as good men, as friends to their country, and to their fellow men, and as pursuing an honourable line of conduct.

It is a more difficult task, from its nature, to examine into, and compare the virtues of individual men; genius and invention leave traces behind them at all times, virtuous conduct only on particular occasions.

In the civil commotions which have so frequently disturbed the peace of this country, the nobility have been, from their prominent situation, compelled to take a more active part than other men! and we

find them, on most occasions, acting very honourably to the party that they embraced. In the long contest between the houses of York and Lancaster, there were men of great honour and bravery on both sides of the question ; but it is impossible to determine as to their merit on the side they espoused, though we are acquainted with the honours they obtained, or the disgrace they incurred in supporting it. With a very few exceptions, we find the nobility acting with great honour and fidelity, and at no time do we ever find that they abandoned those principles by which the great barons were guided, when they compelled their reluctant sovereign to sign Magna Charta, and thereby laid the foundation of the liberty of the people.

It is to be hoped, that whatever may be thought or said of the nobility of other countries, it will never be forgotten, that at a time when the feudal system was in the zenith of its power, and the nobility in most parts of Europe were with one hand opposing their sovereign, and with the other rivetting the chains of their vassals, the British nobility put themselves at the head of the people, and secured their liberties ; they did not revolt in order to exalt themselves, or oppress their inferiors, but in order to establish, on a firm basis, the individual liberty of the meanest subject, with a spirit of wisdom, of justice, and of generosity, that is our pride, and our admiration ; to which conduct we owe our dearest possessions at the present day.

That from the nobility themselves should emanate an order of things which deprived them of the inordinate power which they at that time possessed, is one of those strange moral phenomena that must always astonish mankind, at the same time that it excites the highest degree of admiration.

If we peruse, attentively, the history of other countries, though we see many contests between the kings and nobles, we find them always agreeing about oppressing the people; they disputed to which the right of oppression should belong; but they never disputed about its continuation; and so true is this, that the only advances that the people in other countries made towards freedom, were brought about by the efforts of the kings to humble the nobility. What a glorious contrast does this afford between the nobility of England and of other countries, at a time when the boasted lights of philosophy had not broke forth; when men acted according to their interest, or their conscience; independent of right, and regardless of opinion!!

The brave barons of Runemede are never to be forgotten; THEY FOUGHT NOT FOR THEMSELVES BUT FOR THE PEOPLE, and their wisdom and firmness could only be exceeded by their justice and generosity!

The same spirit has at all times guided the British nobility; for, though divided in contests, where the rights of different families to the throne were the object of dispute, the great majority were at all times

found fighting on the side of liberty, and for the rights of the people; nor ever did they, on any single occasion, *attempt to set up their own rights as a separate object*, or place themselves above other subjects, in respect to the obedience either to the laws of the country, or their duty to their sovereign!

During the great rebellion the nobility, at first, resisted the over exertion of royal prerogative, and separated themselves from the throne*; but we find in almost every instance, that they afterwards quitted the standard, of rebellion, when they perceived greater danger arising to liberty, from the democratic leaders, than from the mistaken views of their royal and unhappy master.†

How many glorious examples are there of individual noblemen, risking life, fortune, and every thing dear to man, to support a falling throne, which they had resisted during the plenitude of its power, in its attempts to oppress the people!! There are many of those examples recorded in this work, sufficient to make a man proud of living in a country which has produced such distinguished patriots, the worthy successors of the Barons of Runcinède.

* The remark has frequently occurred in the body of the work, that nearly all the good men who had resisted Charles at the beginning, joined him afterwards, and remained faithful to him to the last—Few of the nobles fell into the violent errors of the commons.

† The house of peers, at all times, acted like a balance-wheel or regulator, and has answered the purpose with wonderful advantage and effect.

After democracy had nearly annihilated the nobility, and when they had ceased to have any existence as a political body, the spirit of the individuals restored the order, and contributed greatly to the destruction of that anarchy which had been produced; and which, had it continued, would have ruined the nation. The restoration, a measure of great advantage at the time, was chiefly effected by the nobility; and though perhaps they carried their devotion to the will of Charles II. and his brother, a little too far, yet that ill fated and unwise, but well-beloved family, was abandoned, the moment that there was again a question of the subversion of the rights of the people.

The revolution, which placed King William III. on the throne, and which completed the national liberty that the barons had begun at Runemede, was conducted in the same patriotic spirit, and upon the same generous principles; and on the latter, as on the former occasion, the nobility always stood foremost.

It is true, that at the latter period the people at large, the commons of England, bore a great part, for they were become of great importance; but that very importance was the consequence of the noble stand, made by the barons, for the signing of Magna Charta. It was the completion of their work, at which the nobles were assisted by the descendants of those vassals, whom, in the days of darkness and slavery, their ancestors had so bravely and generously emancipated. What a glorious termination

to the labours of the British nobility—labours undertaken for establishing the rights of their fellow-subjects!!

Happily, since that latter period, we have not had occasion to see examples of similar energy, and of similar virtue; but in the still and calm course which our internal affairs have since maintained, the British nobility have held a moderate and a steady hand. If they have not been called upon to restore our liberties, or to rescue them from imminent danger, they have at least laboured constantly to preserve them; and, on more than one occasion, have preserved the balance of the state.

If this eulogium, in praise of British nobility, from the earliest period of the dawn of liberty to the present time, seems written rather with some degree of enthusiasm, let the reader observe, that it is at the END of a work, in which the facts are recorded that establish its justice. At the BEGINNING, it had been badly placed; but here we may adapt the motto of the immortal hero of the Nile and Trafalgar, to the honourable order of whom we have been speaking, *Palmarum qui meruit ferat*.

Having fully shewn the virtue of the British nobility, as acting in a public capacity, it is scarcely necessary to speak of their virtues as private men. That, however, is evident from their individual histories, but admits not of the same sort of elucidation.

Historical records, whether on the great scale of a national register, or the more circumscribed one

of biography, are generally rather a record of the vices, follies, and misfortunes of mankind, than of their virtues or happiness. Even writers of fiction and romance, have been unable to give any long continuance to ideal scenes of happiness and virtue. When vice, folly, and misfortune quit the scene, the historian, whether of transactions that are real, or imaginary, prepares to lay down his pen. This is lamented, in a very forcible and pathetic manner, by the eloquent and accurate historian Robertson; but it is, from the nature of things, unavoidable. The calm, still life of an individual, who is virtuous and happy, may afford materials for a few notes, or memorandums, but it can never furnish matter either for a long, or an interesting history. It is the same with nations; wherever there is neither external war, nor internal faction, there is a chasm in history.

That the private virtues of the British nobility were proportioned to their public, may be learned from this, that there are very few examples of their committing any actions, either criminal or disgraceful. As to foibles, those of men who hold distinguished rank, are always the subject of the ill-natured remarks of envious cotemporaries; and, as has been fully and fairly explained at the beginning of this work, individuals have been flattered at the expence of the order: and numerous and able writers, who gave to their ill nature a form of wit, and dressed it in the garb of poetry, made a practice of slandering

nobility in the gross, and flattering them in detail. Perhaps there is no error that the British nobility have committed, so great as the countenance they have given to such practices.

A nobleman ought to disregard compliments that are paid to him personally, at the expence of his order, as much as a man would spurn at praise obtained for himself, by slandering the other branches of his family. Probably, however, this sort of flattery has been accepted, without suspicion or reflection on the one hand, while it has been presented with art and ability on the other.

In holding up the nobility to public esteem, and in proving that this country has obligations to them of the most durable sort, it is not intended, by any means, to extend their praise beyond the bounds where it fairly ought to go ; and therefore I shall just, with as much freedom, remark on those parts of their conduct which do not appear to deserve praise, as of those that do.

The nobility of this country, who always, on the most trying occasions, have stood forward for the rights of the people, in a bold, firm, and manly manner, have, in ordinary times, been rather at too little pains, to mark the gradual progress of those mutations that are produced by the operation of time.

Amongst the gradual changes that have taken place, in the ways of thinking in modern times, the disposition to dispense with the ancient gradation of ranks in society, is one of the most general and most

dangerous. It has occasionally been, in former times, a favourite plan;* but then it was one of a violent and evanescent nature, arising with the lower orders, which was rejected in the moment of cool reflection.

Even during the great rebellion, and the anarchy that followed it, though the house of lords was for a time abolished, and the dregs of the nation bore the sway; yet the great majority of the people disapproved of those violent proceedings, and revolted at the principles which led to them. The transactions of those times arose out of the expediency, or interest, of the actors, and were not founded on a conviction of their justice, propriety, or general expe-

* Mr. Hume says, that in the time of Wat Tyler, two lines that had never been entirely forgotten, were in high repute,

“ When Adam delv’d and Eve span,
“ Where was then the gentleman ?”

The meaning of these questioning lines is by no means questionable. It evidently points at future equality, by calling to mind the original state of mankind. Unfortunately, however, for those levellers, when there were but one man and a woman, there was no similarity with our present state. It would be as easy to overturn Dr. Smith’s reasoning, respecting the division of labour, by an appeal to the occupations of our first father, as to draw any conclusion about distinctions of ranks when the world only contained a single family. The Trial by Jury, Universal Representation, and all those fine things, were not known to the first and only man; but the levellers, in their elegant appeal to the spade and distaff, do not attempt to overturn any thing of which they themselves approve.

diency ; on the contrary, the levellers themselves, knew one another to be hypocrites, who were professing principles that they did not really entertain, in order to deceive the people, for their own private purposes.

During the last century, however, the same modes of thinking that are subversive of order, were introduced, in a way far more dangerous, and likely to be far more permanent and pernicious. In former times, those ideas of levelling originated with the lower classes, were introduced with violence and precipitation, and accompanied by actions, that could not but be attended with disgust ; and the consequences of which were highly to be regretted ; but in latter times, they were cherished by the higher classes, assumed the form of philosophy and philanthropy, and proceeded according to a system that rendered their influence almost irresistible.

The physical, as well as moral inequality of man, are now both greatly diminished ; whereas, in ancient times, personal slavery degraded a vast proportion of the population ; and in early periods, when the useful arts were in their infancy, men obtained the means of existence with so much labour, that the mind remained uncultivated, and the body in a state of depression. In those times, wealth, or bodily strength, or a greater degree of knowledge, gave the possessor of either, a decided superiority over the rest of the community.

During the reign of the feudal system, which was established on the ruins of the Roman empire,

the inequality took a different form, but it continued as great as ever : it is even questionable whether it was not greater, than almost at any period of ancient history.

The invention of gunpowder gradually put an end to the physical superiority which men enjoyed, by mere personal strength ; and the art of printing, by the multiplication of books, by their cheapness, and the facility of obtaining the means of reading and writing, put their mental faculties nearer on a level.

The abbreviations of labour, by inventions in mechanism, and the division of labour, by rendering industry more productive, had, during the same period, enabled a smaller number of persons to supply the wants of the whole ; and thus a greater number were left at leisure, for the improvement of the mind.

A number of other circumstances, (that are generally known,) had raised the inferior classes to a degree of independence and importance, that was without precedent, when about the middle of the eighteenth century, a sect of men, calling themselves philosophers, originating in France, extended all over Europe, and carried on a close, but secret, correspondence, the ultimate end of which was, to undermine all distinction of rank, and substitute for it, precedence according to genius and abilities.

Those philosophers were mostly men of bad principles, and of depraved manners, but excessively vain and selfish ; hating superiority, and at the same

time consummate hypocrites, though many of them were men of great learning and abilities.*

* In the month of September, 1789, before the king of France and his family were dragged to Paris, and made prisoners (but some months after the revolution had broke out), Monsieur Le Roi, lieutenant of the king's hunt, an academician, philosopher, and encyclopedist, dining at the table of the Count D'Angevilliers, the conversation turned after dinner on the evils of the revolution ; (it was what was termed at that time in Paris an aristocratical dinner,) but Le Roi was a revolutionist ; to whom the Count said, " Well, Sir ; all this, however, is the work of PHILOSOPHY." Thunderstruck at these words, " Alas !" cried the academician, " To whom do you say so ? I know it but too well ; and I shall die of *grief and remorse* !" At the word remorse, the nobleman asked, why he reproached himself so bitterly. " I have contributed to it," replied Le Roi, " far more than I was aware of ; I was secretary to the committee to which you are indebted for it ; but I call Heaven to witness, that I never thought it would go to such a length. You have seen me in the king's service, and you know I love his person ; I little thought of bringing his subjects to this pitch, and I shall die of *grief and remorse*."

Pressed to explain what he meant by this society, intirely new to the whole company, the academician resumed. " This society was a club which we philosophers had formed amongst us ; into which we only admitted persons whom we could trust. Our sittings were regularly held at the Baron D'Holbach's. Lest our objects should be surmised, we call ourselves æconomists ; we created Voltaire, though absent, our honorary and perpetual president ; our principal members were D'Alembert, Turgot, Condorcet, Diderot, La Harpe, and that Lamoignon, who, on his dismissal, shot himself in his park." The whole of this declaration was accompanied with tears and sighs, when the adept, deeply penitent, continued. " The following

On the continent of Europe, they contrived to draw kings, princes, and nobles, into their way of

were our occupations: most of those works which have appeared for this long time past against religion, morals, and government, were ours, or from authors devoted to us: they were all composed by the members, or by the order of the society. Before they were delivered to the press, they were brought to our office; then we revised and corrected them, added to, or curtailed them, according as circumstances required. When our philosophy was too glaring for the time, or for the object of the work, we brought it to a lower tint; and when we thought we might be more daring, then we spoke openly. In a word, we made our authors say exactly what we pleased; then the work was published, under a title or name we had chosen, the better to hide the hand from whence it came. Many books, supposed to have been posthumous works, such as Christianity unmasked, and divers others, attributed to Freret and Boulanger, after their deaths, were issued from our society. When we had approved of these works, we began to print them on fine and ordinary paper, in sufficient numbers to pay our expences; and then in immense numbers, on the commonest paper. The latter we sent to hawkers and booksellers, free of cost, (or nearly so), who were to circulate them among the people at the lowest rate.

“These were the means used to pervert, and to bring the people to the state you now see them in. I shall not see them long: for I shall die of grief and remorse.”

There is not any certainty when this society was commenced, but it was probably about the middle of last century, as Monsieur Bertin, keeper of the privy purse to Louis XV., mentions the philosophers constantly soliciting that monarch to allow them to found free-schools, under the pretence of teaching the poor at the expence of the king, but under their direction. Monsieur Bertin was at great pains to find out the real

thinking: and it was natural that the people would embrace, with enthusiasm, a system by which they would rise to importance.

By degrees the inequality of ranks, which formerly was considered as natural, became hateful; yet the nobility themselves seemed unconscious of their danger, and even assisted in opening the doors of the garrison, which it was both their interest and duty to defend.

In England, the philosophy made less progress than

meaning of all this: and at last discovered that they expended considerable sums, and took infinite trouble, by selling cheap, and even giving away books written by Voltaire, Diderot, and others, to prepare the people for a new system. It was only by convincing the king of this, that he prevented the establishment of the schools; for though Louis was a dissolute man of pleasure, and too careless to be a good king, he wished well to his subjects. He was an honest and honourable man; and could not, without proof, believe that the philosophers were deceiving him.

Frustrated in establishing schools, they contrived, by a secret connection and correspondence, to provide tutors and instructors, who could forward their schemes. D'Alembert had a regular office for tutors, to which those who wanted recommendation applied. He extended his plan to professors of colleges and public teachers, as well as private tutors; and by means of his confederates, effected his purpose.

The horrible part such of the philosophers acted, as lived to see the revolution, will never be forgot. They shewed, that the fanaticism and cruelty of system-mongers, and philosophers, are worse than those of the wildest enthusiasts in religion.

in other countries: the philosophers were less numerous, and the nobility not quite so negligent and pliant; but still in this country they were highly to blame, and had even joined in the laugh against their own order, and given a sort of credit and currency to opinions, which they should have made it their glory, as it was their duty, to resist.

The new opinions had become fashionable; and it was generally considered as a mark of want of intellect, when a man of fashion adhered to the solid principles of his ancestors, now termed prejudices. Antiquated opinions, like antiquated dress, were sneered at; and few men can bear the force of ridicule, which indeed is only to be resisted by great strength of mind, or by having adopted a line of conduct, with a determination to remain inflexible.

In matters of little importance, such as dress, to comply with custom and taste is proper; but in maxims and ways of thinking on national affairs, there ought to be no regard to taste; taste, when introduced in such matters, is as much misplaced as ornament would be in a mathematical demonstration.

Unfortunately this change of opinion on the continent of Europe became so universal, was so much disseminated amongst the higher classes, and its evil tendency and ultimate consequences either so carefully concealed, or so ill understood, that scarcely any opposition was made to its becoming a rule of

action, until it was too late to resist its farther progress.*

The nobility of this country remained in a great measure untainted, but not altogether so. The wit and sarcasms of the philosophers produced some effect; and rank and title were not held in equal estimation, by men who enjoyed them as they had formerly been, and as they still ought to be, if stability and happiness are aimed at by mankind.

Happiness depends much on opinion, and so long

* Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, whose rank, genius, and penetration, gave weight to whatever he did, was a great patron of the sect; but they never initiated him in the grand mystery, the destruction of kings, and overthrow of governments. He was very willing to assist in overturning religion and the altars; but when he discovered that the thrones also were to fall, his rage was without bounds: then it was that he quarrelled with Voltaire, and the philosophers whom he had encouraged and admired, in order to be flattered with the title of "The Philosophic King." "Those philosophers," said he, when he found them out, "are a sort of madmen, who are for governing every thing by rule and theory. They wish the whole world to be a republic; and would resolve all questions of state like a problem in mathematics, by algebra. It would be well to let them try their hand in governing, upon some rebellious province, that deserved the severest punishment, &c." Such was the opinion of that philosophic king, after he knew that they wished to overturn thrones. The philosophy, however, had got too deep root at Berlin; and dearly have the successors of Frederic and his country paid for having a king who was an atheist, a poet, a wit, and a philosopher.

as men reason, their free actions will be the result of it; and, therefore, as an order of nobility is very essential for the support of a mixed and free government, it is of great importance that public opinion should be favourable to its maintenance. The nobility themselves should resist, with their whole power and energy, every effort that is made to represent them as being an useless order in the state.

The balance of a watch, or the pendulum of a clock, though they possess no power of giving motion, are quite as essential to the construction of the machine as the spring, or the weights which constitute the moving powers; and therefore it is absurd to undervalue one part, because it is not endowed with the same properties as another. If an hereditary nobility are confined by their situation from acting a part that commoners may act, so likewise are they fitted, by their situation, to act a part which commoners cannot act; and it would be impossible to regulate national affairs, in that excellent manner in which they are regulated, without having a portion of the legislature independant both of the king and of the people. Though it is not easy to say what new plan may, in the course of time, and under a new order and organization of society, become practicable; yet, composed as the nation now is, it is not easy to conceive any regulating order in the state, so well adapted to the purpose, as a class of men, who are placed, as it were, above the situation

of all others.* They are independent in point of income or revenue (which even the sovereign himself is not, either in this or in any other country), they are also possessed of rank and political importance, independent equally of the sovereign, or of the people; therefore, as far as human combination can raise any portion of mankind above the rest, they are so elevated. They are men placed above every one of those considerations, that operate on the other two branches of the legislature, as far as it is possible for men to be.†

Many of the commoners are, in point of money,

* The nobility are represented as leaning to the side of the kings, in opposition to that of the people. This is a great mistake, for in fact we find quite the contrary to be true; and that they have generally resisted the kings in favour of the people. It is impossible, however, for any order of men to exist, in any state, that may not be liable, on particular occasions, to be biassed by their own private interest; and as no man can be possessed of every object which he might desire, this species of complete independence is merely ideal. All that can be done, is to put a man out of the reach of necessity or strong temptation. It must still remain to be decided between his honour, his conscience, and his passions, which of the three is to govern his conduct.

† The rendering of the judges independant of the king, with revenues for life, was a great improvement on the administration of justice. For the same reason, the chief justice is generally now raised to the peerage; so that the judges are, in every respect, independent men, as far as it is possible in this world to make men independent.

equally independent as peers in general are; but then they are not members of the legislature, without the voice of the people (with a few exceptions); therefore the balancing power, that is, the house of lords, is rendered independant of, and insulated as it were, from the other members of the state. To say that noblemen may still be gained over by court favour, or other means, is only saying, that after all they are men. It would be just as well to object to them because they are mortal, and subject to bodily infirmity; and therefore so far like the poorest man in the kingdom.

In point of political independence, every thing has been done for the peers that is practicable; and here it should be observed, that if nobility were not hereditary, that could not be the case. The nobility would then be few in number, in general old men, and might have bargained with the crown before they obtained their rank; so that whatever may be said in favour of acquired nobility, in opposition to hereditary titles, as a political institution it would not answer the same purpose. It might correspond better with modern ideas, respecting merit alone giving preference; but in practical utility, it would be greatly inferior.

Opinion and force govern mankind; but as from the former arise will and inclination, and from the latter necessity, the continuance of the first is of far the longest duration. Men endeavour to preserve a state of things that accords with their will and in-

clination; and they are constantly struggling against the operation of force or necessity. So much is this the case, that no tyrant has ever had so much power, as not to find it wise to endeavour to get opinion and good will in some degree in his favour; and as men become better informed, this support, derived from opinion, becomes the more necessary. What does all the veneration for ancient dynasties signify? What do the disputes about divine right signify, but to bring, as much as possible, opinion in aid of power and force?

Without the support of opinion, force soon crumbles into dust, and with it, even what is feeble may endure for ages.

During the feudal system, the barons and lords had force and power for their support; but they did not trust to those entirely. They made friends of their vassals, and the connexion was like that of the chief of a family, and the inferior branches; they were connected in interest and by affection; and support on the one hand, and protection on the other, were the consequences.

Now, however, the case is almost entirely changed with respect to the nobility of this and most other countries. They are no longer supported by force, and the ties between the landlord and his tenants, or his servants, are by no means of the same agreeable nature that they were formerly. Till within the last century, the inhabitants of the country, the farmers and labourers, looked up to the landlords with res-

pect and affection : they often partook of their hospitality, and they admired those qualities which their superiors possessed, without feeling envy ; but it is not so now. The tenant seldom sees his landlord, and frequently thinks himself his equal : or, if he acknowledges inferiority, it is not unaccompanied with a feeling of envy.

During the feudal system, titles of nobility became hereditary ; and the institution was then supported by every human means. The kings were dependent on their nobles in time of war ; and their vassals owed to them protection, and not only obeyed willingly, but respected and loved them.

This then was the state of things all over Europe ; yet, with all those circumstances in their favour, the nobility have been uninterruptedly and universally sinking, both in power and in esteem, in every country ; and in France, the only country that has undergone a revolution of late times, the order has not only been abolished, but the members proscribed, persecuted, and robbed of their estates.* Although a new order of nobility is rising in France, which in time may become numerous and hereditary, yet that

* When the revolutionists in Oliver Cromwell's time abolished the house of peers, they only acted upon the levelling principle from momentary impulse, and not like the French, on a permanent plan ; but now that France has set the example, such mistakes will be avoided, and those who in future want to abolish nobility, will do it in a permanent manner. The seizure and sale of estates rivetted the business in France.

only tends to shew the utility of the order, and the impracticability of conducting political affairs without holding up honour as one of the inducements to great actions.

In mentioning this part of the subject, it is to be noticed, that in our own days, we have had the example of a new dynasty, and a new race of nobility; established exactly on the old principle of conquest that gave birth to both in the dark ages and in early times. Whether the new dynasty and the new nobility will be permanent or not, is nothing to the purpose. A fortunate general has seized power, and made himself an emperor; and he has raised those who assisted him, to rank and honour, under new forms and modifications; but in all this there is nothing new; all usurpers and conquerors have ever done the same, and they always will do the same.

The support that is wanted from public opinion, is not so much in favour of personal nobility, as in favour of hereditary nobility. Wherever there are rulers, there will be a gradation of ranks; but the business is, to manage things so, that the gradation of ranks may be of general utility, and contribute to the happiness of the people, which we find, both from the history of our country, and from that of individuals, the hereditary nobility of England have done; whereas it is to be naturally conceived, that a personal nobility would be the instrument of kingly power; and that if its members could not communicate their rank to their sons by hereditary right,

they might do it by royal favour. If there are then occasions for preferring personal nobility to hereditary, there are other very strong ones for giving the preference to the hereditary establishment of the order.

Let us consider the subject as much as we please, we shall still find that there must be an order of nobility : and, that if there is to be such an order, it is most expedient and advantageous for the liberties of the people, that it should be hereditary as in this country, and have a share in the legislature. We have already seen, that in the individual line advantages are produced by hereditary honours, and that there are a far greater number of men of merit amongst the nobility, than amongst an equal number of men of fortune who have not rank. We have also found that the peers, acting politically in a body, have exerted themselves in a most disinterested manner to obtain and preserve the liberties of their country on almost every occasion : it therefore cannot remain a matter of doubt, whether or not an order of hereditary nobility, such as is established in England, is a wise and beneficial institution.

The number of the nobility admits of a few observations, as there is not any subject that is more misconceived. Because we have a greater number of peers than we had half a century ago, it is alledged that they are become too numerous. This is very like the complaints about heavy taxation in the time of Charles II., when one year's expenditure was about

equal to what we now expend in ten days !! This is like a boy of six years of age, thinking he is a great boy, because two years before he was less. The greatness indeed is relative, but not real; for three hundred nobility are still very few for England. The royal prerogative of creating lords is envied, and exclaimed against by many; but those persons are ignorant of the origin of that, for it does not spring from any power given the king to the prejudice of commoners, but from a power very fortunately seized by our kings, to diminish the influence and number of the feudal barons.

After the conquest, possessions in land rendered the proprietor a baron by tenure, and the creation of barons by right was an artful invention to keep the landholders in check; and as it so happened, that those haughty lords set more value upon their power individually than collectively, the baronage by tenure was allowed to fall into disuse. In other countries it was not so; there were in France above 16,000 noble families, that is fifty times the number there are in England; and if the barons by right had not taken place of the barons by tenure, we should now have had many more nobility than we have;* perhaps ten times the number. At the end of the wars between the Houses of York and Lan-

* The power of granting patents for inventions is nearly of the same nature; instead of its being a privilege vested in the king, it is a remainder only of the former unlimited power of the sovereign. After the despotic princes of the Tudor family had abused the power of granting monopoly and exclusive privi-

caster, that is, when Henry VII. mounted the throne, there were but thirty-six temporal peers in England!

It is only by comparing the number at present with the number that they were about half a century ago, that they appear many; for if compared with those of other countries, they are very few; or if compared with what they would have been, had they been by tenure, they are very few; and also they are few, when compared with the number of the nobility in Scotland before the union, and even at this day, notwithstanding the numbers extinct by death and attainder. So that in no reasonable way can we consider the nobility as being numerous, when the extent and population of the country are considered.

Those persons who suppose that all disposition to undermine the present order of things has ceased with the violent effervescence of the French revolution, are under a great mistake. Those who wish for change admit that the first experiment has failed; but, like a losing gamester, or a disappointed

lege, King James, the first of the Stuarts, who was not quite so despotically inclined; (and who, if he had possessed the same will, had not the same power), allowed it to be restricted. The power of granting patents by an act vi of James I. appears to vest a power in the king; whereas, it in reality is an act for taking a very extensive, and nearly unlimited power from the king, and only reserving a small portion of it restricted to new inventions. The former gave a power of injuring the public, to enrich individuals! the latter only enables individuals to become rich in the event of serving the public.

chemist, they would renew their trials with redoubled energy. It is not to such persons that it is necessary or useful to appeal. Their opinion is formed and fixed, and neither arguments, facts, nor experience, will alter their manner of thinking; but in this, and in every country, such persons are not the most numerous; the greater number are well-intentioned, liable indeed to be misled, but never intending to injure their country.

It is to gain over this great number to a right way of reasoning, (as they already are right in their wishes and principles,) that is the main object, and they will, no doubt, be happy to find that the prejudices excited against distinction of ranks, are very ill-founded, and contradicted by the history of the nobility of this country, whether acting as peers in a body, or as individual men.

Though it is not directly in the line of this work, to make any observations on the manner of electing members for the House of Commons; yet the subject is nearly connected in its nature with that of the nobility; we shall therefore say a few words on that subject.

One of the great objections to our present system of elections is founded on the supposed influence of peers in returning members; and the grand basis of projected reform, is the supposed equal rights of men to be represented in Parliament. On both those subjects, something ought to be said in this place; for it is a fact (which has not been to my knowledge ever noticed, and which certainly is but little known,) that most of the men of merit who have

got into Parliament, have first come into that assembly under the protection of some peer ; or for some of those boroughs, the very existence of which is so much complained of, and considered as so great a grievance, and such an imperfection as not to be admitted to continue.*

If there were no members but for counties, or for large populous cities ; then none but men of great fortune, or who were distinguished by some particular service, could come into Parliament. Young men of genius, but of slender fortune, never would find the means of serving their country as members of the legislature.

The truth is, that one great part of the perfection of our House of Commons consists in the very un-

* Mr. Pitt, afterwards the great Lord Chatham, first came in member for Camelford. His son, whose merits and abilities have never been disputed, was brought in first by Sir James Lowther, for one of his boroughs ; and Mr. Fox, when he was prevented from coming in for Westminster, took refuge in some boroughs in the northern isles of Scotland, under the controul of his friend, then Sir Thomas Dundas.

Look to which side of the House we may, we shall find this holds true. Mr. Wardle came in for Oakhampton, which, if representation were equal, would not return a member. Lord Folkstone, and many others highly esteemed by those who seek a change, have owed their entrance into the House to places of little importance. I do not deny, that when merit is once generally known, such men may come in for the most populous county or borough in the kingdom, but unless they could come in before they were generally known, they could never then come in at all.

equal manner in which the representatives are chosen. This is not the only political institution, of which the fitness consists, in what appears imperfection, as the beauty of landscape consists often in irregularity.*

Reformers aim at uniformity, that is, an equal number of electors for each place, which certainly appears to be a fair and equitable mode; and, perhaps, might be expected to be an advantageous one, but we must not trust merely to appearances, but examine what would be the actual effect.

Those who talk of reforming the present abuses have never, it is true, proposed any settled plan; but they have not done that, probably, because they

* According to such theorists, the beauty of irregularity must be the most absurd thing in nature. There must be some one object that is the *most beautiful*, the *most perfect of any*.

In a continual repetition of that object must then be the extreme of beauty, or the greatest possible quantity of beauty. This is a specimen of that sort of reasoning which is the effect of aiming at perfection, a thing totally incompatible with the situation of this world. In all the sophistry of the advocates of the rights for man, nothing more profound is to be discovered than this logic, which in reality is absurd and untrue. As there must be some object more beautiful than any other, by adding beauties of an inferior order, the greatest possible quantity of beauty cannot be obtained, it must necessarily consist in a repetition of the most beautiful object. The absurdity of this is pretty evident, yet it is equally unanswerable with most of the theories about perfection in the representative system.

aim at more than they think it would be prudent at first to avow ; perhaps trusting that they might proceed more safely by developing their views as they proceed and gather strength, though it is evident that nothing short of UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE and EQUAL REPRESENTATION would satisfy them. I say, it is evident that nothing less would satisfy them, because whatever plan falls short of that, will partake, more or less, of the present imperfect and unequal representation ; and there is no reason, if we depart from the present unequal representation, (which is at least sanctioned by its antiquity,) for adopting a new and untried plan, that shall have similar imperfections.

The term radical reform shews what the lovers of innovation have in view, and to this they lay claim, as being founded on a *natural right*. No doubt, wherever our social rights can be made to correspond with our natural rights, it is a desirable thing that it should be done. The fact, however, is, that the natural right of every man to a vote, has no existence in reality, though it has the appearance of existing.

I do not know that even any of the greatest and most enthusiastic sticklers for equality* conceived

* The French carried the system pretty far, even at first, as every person, by the constitution of 1789, was to have a vote who paid three livres (2s. 6d.) a year direct taxes. The consequence was, that the majority at all elections consisted of the lower orders of people, and this was the way that such a set of miscreants obtained seats in the second assembly, that allowed the constitution to be overturned, and the king dethroned. The

the project of extending the rights of voting for representatives either to paupers or to criminals ; yet, (except so far as is indispensably necessary,) neither paupers nor even criminals are divested of their natural rights. It is as lawful for a man living on charity to defend his person, as it is for the first man in the nation ; and it is equally unlawful to insult, assault, or ill-treat him,*—his *natural rights* remain unalienated in every respect ; but as the power of voting for a representative does not extend to such a person, it is not a natural right, but a *privilege*, or a social right, to which a condition is attached, whereas there is no condition attached to the possession of a natural right.

If, then, the power of voting is not derived from a natural right, but is a privilege, the pure theory of universal suffrage falls to the ground, and is not to be

people, however, and the leaders said, not without some justice : “ Why draw a line at three livres, between those who vote, and those who cannot vote. This is an ideal, an arbitrary, and an unjust line.” Let every man, who is not a mendicant or a criminal, have equal rights. On this footing they set out in electing the Convention of Regicides, when Robespierre shewed what men so elected by universal suffrage were capable of doing ! This convention is the only example of the full effects of universal suffrage, and let its best friends try to hide its hideous features, if they can.

* It is out of no disrespect to paupers, that they are named with men who have offended against the laws, but that it is necessary for the sake of the argument.

considered as necessary to be established ; and the PRIVILEGE, for such it becomes, is like all other privileges of men in society : it requires to be modified and regulated according to the general interest.

We must therefore not treat universal suffrage as a question of right, but of expediency ; and it is of great importance that it should be so understood ; for so long as it is considered as an inherent and natural right, all those reformers who have founded their projects on that basis, will remain dissatisfied ; and we must not forget that men constantly aim at change, while they are dissatisfied with what they possess, nor will any reform be durable or prosper, that does not give content ; for the basis of every permanent state of things, where there is any degree of freedom, is content, or being satisfied with that state of things.

As universal suffrage was a project naturally enough entertained by theorists, who wished to establish liberty on the most extensive scale possible, and was actually floating in the minds of the reformers here in England before the French revolution, (where it was tried for the first time) ; it becomes essential to the stability of any reform that may hereafter be effected, (and is not, upon that principle), to shew that suffrage is not a natural right, but an acquired privilege.

That universal suffrage is incompatible with the welfare of the state, is nearly certain. There are about 4,000,000 men that have attained their full

age in Great Britain and Ireland, and there are 658 representatives, which gives about 4600 voters for each member, and as the members are chosen in pairs, it would give rather more than 9000 voters for each place ; of which voters, the great majority would always be poor men, labourers, mechanics, or servants. The respectable voters would always constitute only a minority ; and therefore, in fact, would not be represented.

In France, at the second election in 1791, the qualification of the voters excluded all such as did not pay three livres (2s. 6d.) direct taxes annually, yet the elections were every where conducted by the lower order of people : men of respectability generally kept away, and when they attended they were pushed about, threatened, and maltreated,* and at all events were in a minority. There is not any country under the heavens where the same cause would not produce nearly the same effect, for whatever difference there may be between the people of one country and those of another, in manners, ha-

* In Scotland, where in some parishes the ministers are chosen by what they term a popular call, there is an example of the effects of popular election in the established clergy ; in others, the right of presentation resides in the landholders, and in some of them the king is the patron. The parishes where the popular call prevails, are generally filled with men either of a violent and fanatical turn, or addicted to fawning and hypocrisy ; that is to say, they resemble what we call in England methodists.

bits, and intellects, there is none of any essential importance between their main propensities; those, in all cases, lead such as have power, and know it, to make use of it; and therefore, if in elections the chief power is lodged in the lower orders, they will combine together, and exert it as completely as they can. We do not need to go to France, or any other nation, to prove this; we may find it proved in Westminster, and wherever the rights of election are extended to the poorer classes.

If there were in this country universal suffrage, then the number of electors in every case would be nearly equal to those of Westminster; and in very few places would there be so many proprietors and persons carrying on respectable business.

The lower order would nominate in almost every instance; and without inquiring into the advantage or disadvantage, the wisdom or policy of that, we must, in the first place, acknowledge that it would be unfair; that it would leave those most interested in the preservation of the state, in a situation the least able to protect it, or assist in its preservation.

A nation that is governed by the lower classes, or by representatives chosen by the lower classes, must be in a constant state of change, like the water in a boiling pot, which receives its constant motion from the lowest particles being the lightest, and therefore inclined to come to the top.

It would be the same with every country, where the power resided essentially in the lower orders;

for as those who rose one year by their exertions would be high the next, a new effort to displace them, would be made by such as remained below ; and thus a continual state of ebullition, or of revolution, would be kept up, till anarchy would ensue ; out of which anarchy would arise despotism, as it always has done and always will do.

If then we see that universal suffrage is not a natural right, and therefore not to be claimed as such, how much more ought we to avoid making an effort to obtain it, if we find that it would be in a high degree pernicious and dangerous? We must then examine how far we may with safety and advantage approach this dangerous species of suffrage ; which we shall find to be both an important and an intricate question. But this question cannot be properly discussed, without taking into view the nature and consequences of EQUAL REPRESENTATION.

Without equal representation, universal suffrage is a mere chimera, in so far as it is connected with right ; for though every person in every county were to have a vote, yet, unless the counties were equal, or nearly equal, there would be no sort of equality amongst the voters. If, again, we were to have equal representation, London and Middlesex would have about fifty representatives? who, being all animated with one spirit, and having constituents who had one interest, and could act in unison, would be more than equal to twice the number of members from different parts, without connection, without

uniformity of object, and acting separately as they would do.

If then we were to equalise the representation, we should greatly injure the spirit that ought to animate the members; and thus by trying to reform Parliament in its manner and formation, we should destroy it in its efficient utility, its real advantage.

In whatever manner we view universal suffrage and equal representation TOGETHER, we shall find them totally inimical to public tranquillity and national safety; and if we take them SEPARATELY, they are a mockery. They are incapable of satisfying those who seek *reform upon what is termed, by some, principle, and by others radical reform*; we must then lose sight of that, and not consider the present plan faulty, because it is unequal; neither must we in equality aim at perfection or amelioration, but rather inquire into the actual defects, and try if we can get rid of those in some degree, without launching so far out as to endanger the advantages that we at present possess.

Granting that there is an injustice in men who contribute to the expences of the state having no vote, or share in the elections, it is necessary to inquire how we are to draw the line so as to give no more extention to the privilege than will be useful to those by whom it is enjoyed; but in doing this, we must not forget that wherever we draw the line, those who are excluded will be discontented, be-

cause that line will be an arbitrary line, not founded upon such certain principles as admit of no difference of opinions with respect to the justice, or even the wisdom of the arrangement.

In despair of finding any rule to go by, that will satisfy those who cry out for radical reform, and whose plans would ruin the country, the safest and best method will probably be, to prune the present system by lopping off its excrescences, and diminishing that excessive inequality that exists, and is productive of so much discontent.

Let us not err in seeking happiness and freedom in perfection, which is not to be attained ; and like the merchant of Bagdat, in searching for the talisman of Oromanes, where it was not to be found, sacrifice those blessings which we already enjoy. No political compass has yet been discovered, that will guide us in the open sea of reform. We must keep the land-marks and light-houses that are on the shore within our view, otherwise we may lose our way, and wreck our vessel. We cannot safely trace out a new mode of election, on a *tabula rasa* ; we can only venture to make a few changes on what we already have.

Fortunately for this nation, the basis of a very good constitution exists. It is not so in almost any other country. There, from necessity, before they can have a good constitution, they must undo what they have got : we have no occasion to do so, and therefore if we go to work with moderation and wisdom, our work will be easy, and the danger small.

If, on the contrary, we go rashly to reform, our misfortune will be doubly great; for we shall lose what is well worth preserving, and ought to be preserved.

When the French began a reform on their government, they had no ground to work upon. The states-general was an old machine, that had never been much in use; and that for centuries had not been once employed. The feudal system was still in considerable force, when the states-general had been last assembled, and the church was then also in great power and splendour. It was not then to be expected that such an institution could in our days answer the intended purpose, and consequently it underwent a RADICAL REFORM; that is to say, it was turned topsy-turvy. The third state, which formerly looked up to the two others, as superior in rank and intelligence, now looked down upon both with contempt; and though the misery that followed was great, and the despotism that has succeeded, is beyond description; yet the overturn of the ancient form of government was no great loss to the country, for it was neither good in itself, nor could it have been very durable under the changes that had taken place amongst mankind.

Time, (which Lord Bacon says is the greatest innovator in the world), had produced such changes, as rendered not only the government of France, but all the governments on the continent, antiquated in their form, and inadequate in their effect. If the French government had been excellent in its nature, still its ancient form was become so unsuitable to

the state of society, that it could not long have existed; and therefore those who overturned it, had only shaken a leaf that was ready to fall. The injury was not at any rate great; but, as the matter stood, it was nearly nothing. The constitution, (if constitution it could be called,) scarcely deserved preservation. To have a few worthless courtiers join in decrying and misleading their sovereign, that they might trample upon, pillage, and oppress the people, was not a desirable thing; yet such was the government of France: still even that government is regretted by all who have either read of, or remember it, on account of the miseries that have arisen from the wild plan of radical reform that was adopted.

If then even in France, where the government was neither good, nor permanent in its nature, still those who overturned it had reason to repent of their rashness, how much more must we have reason to avoid a similar error, when we must begin by putting to risk an invaluable possession.

The existence of the House of Peers, and the unequal manner of chusing representatives for the Commons House of Parliament, are the two parts of our constitution that differ the most widely from those theoretical principles, to which modern reformers have looked, and to which all those who want radical reform always will look.* Those who think

* One of the most alarming circumstances that has taken place of late years, is an opinion given in the House of Com-

that the example of France will be a warning to such men, are greatly mistaken. The failure of France is attributed to every thing but to error in the system. Some attribute it to the war; others to the king; others to the intrigues of the priests and nobles, and still a greater number to the volatile nature of the French nation; so that those who originally approved of the plan, would still try the experiment, in full confidence of success; determined to avoid the errors of the French, and thereby avoid similar misfortunes.

It is then for the nobility of this country to act

mons, that the French constitution of 1789, was the most glorious work of human wisdom. This is alarming, for various reasons:

1st. Because it was made after the French constitution had been tried and failed, and after it had brought the greatest misery on that country; it shewed, therefore, that unfortunate experience had little effect in changing a deep-rooted opinion.

2d. Because that unqualified approbation implied a total dereliction of the principles of our constitution, established at the accession of William III. inasmuch as the French constitution admitted of no distinction of ranks, as it required no qualification for being elected a member of the house of representatives, which passed its votes at one sitting, without a revisal and without any controuling assembly; from which also his majesty's ministers were distinctly excluded; and which, above all, declared, that the power of changing the constitution, at pleasure, resided permanently and inalienably in the people.

3d. Every thing that has of late happened in France, has been so entirely disconnected with the principles of liberty in any possible form, that no allusion can be made to what has passed in that country for these last twelve years.

like their forefathers, and resist innovation whenever it appears in the form of theoretical perfection, or the abolition of rank, and an undistinguished equality of rights, which last is a chimera of the most dangerous sort; innovation, apparently founded on the natural rights of man, is quite contrary to the rights of men who have entered into any social compact, that is, to say of men under every possible form of government.

As the contents of these volumes prove, that the best guardians of our liberties have been the nobility, and that hereditary rank is attended with great advantages, they form a basis for what might be called a *contre projet* to the plans of equality and universal suffrage, which are the prelude to an attempt at establishing equality.

I am not ignorant that this work has, when viewed in a certain light, a great disadvantage. It is not of a popular seductive nature, like those of theorists in politics who bring in aid the passions of mankind, and who flatter the great number under the appearance of philanthropy and a liberal way of thinking. It has the farther disadvantage of not being susceptible of the support of sophistry; and, above all, instead of being a fashionable, it is an antiquated study, to which I am obliged to call the attention of men little inclined to listen, and still less inclined to alter their opinion.

In struggling against those obstacles, I have made my appeal to facts, considering argument as incon-

clusive and unequal to the purpose. I have also done what was in my power, to divest the study of Pedigree of its antiquated form, and to give it novelty and something interesting which it did not before possess, by the addition of the charts ; and farther, I have endeavoured to draw a conclusion, and bring the whole to effect something practically useful.

If I have endeavoured to do what was beyond my ability, my zeal and ardour will, I hope, be received in good part ; and that I may be permitted to make a few observations, addressed principally to those to whose patronage I am indebted for support in this undertaking.

I have not written to gratify individual vanity, but to do justice to the order of nobility as an hereditary establishment, and as composed of men equally estimable for virtue, talents, and political utility, in order that it may still continue to have the support of public opinion, without which, it cannot long be preserved. I am convinced, that such persons, as approve of those views, will forgive me for not inserting many particular circumstances relative to families, which could not have advanced, but must have impeded the end I proposed to effect, by not only swelling the size of the work, but by clogging it with a species of information that is not of any general interest.

To those who either disapprove of, or are indifferent with regard to the attainment of my object, I

have nothing to say. Such proprietors in this country as are indifferent or inimical to the cause of truth, or to the interests of the nation, can only be considered as being guided by interested or bad motives; and all that are not will, I am persuaded, allow that this publication tends to clear up a very important political question, by establishing, from facts, the advantages arising from hereditary nobility.

One thing may still remain necessary, to obtain for my work the approbation of those who granted me their patronage before they saw the performance; that is, a belief of my sincerity. Though that makes nothing to the facts brought forward or the fair conclusion drawn from them, yet, in every work of this sort, the real opinion of the author is of some importance, as it leads the reader to determine whether he himself feels what he appears to feel. Except in mathematical demonstration, the opinion of him who labours to establish a fact, is always of some importance. Though no one would enquire whether Euclid actually believed that the three angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles, yet, we cannot help wishing to know, whether Oliver Cromwell was a hypocrite, or acted from conviction, when he murdered his sovereign and abolished the House of Peers, protesting that he did so to serve his country.

I must, therefore, be permitted to speak for a moment of myself. It was in the year 1792 that I first began to write in support of the present order

of things in England. When in Paris, I attacked the wild theories of the boasted constitution of 1789; and, amongst other things, the abolition of all distinction of ranks and universal suffrage. The work was printed in Paris, and published by a London bookseller,* and since that time, I have written a great variety of works, all of them guided by the same principles. Why it happens, that an individual who enjoys neither rank nor fortune, nor public place, nor emolument, should be anxious to preserve the present order of things, when many who enjoy them all, are totally unconcerned, I cannot properly explain, for I have no right to judge of principles or motives of such men, but I attribute it to their seeing the danger in a different light. A man who has never seen the ravages of fire, will not naturally feel as one who has seen it: the latter is my case.

I lived in the very centre of the French revolution during three years; I knew a number of the principal actors. The transactions were too interesting not to occupy my attention, and the wild enthusiasm too ridiculous not to excite contempt, and too dangerous not to occasion horror. Hence it is, that I contracted an irresistible antipathy to all such propagators of systems;† and, without consideration, either

* Lane, Leadenhall-street.

† As to the system-mongers and philosophers, I had no personal reason to dislike them; I knew many of them, and they behaved very well to me. When my book of *Linear Arithmetic*

of interest or expediency, I have, on all occasions, acted from that antipathy ever since.

In the year 1797, on the same day that Mr. Sheridan acted so noble a part in the House of Commons, respecting the mutiny in the fleet, I dined with that gentleman in a small company, at a tavern, upon some business. On that occasion I thought it well to make some preliminary explanation about political opinions, to prevent a disagreeable feeling that otherwise might take place; I considered it as a piece of respect due to a man of his abilities; I therefore said—"No doubt, Sir, as I had the honour of being known to you about ten or twelve years ago, and was then what they call a whig, and am now called an aristocrat, you may think me a turn-coat; I shall explain that in a few words.—You know I have lived in France; where, during the three first years of the revolution, I saw so many wild and

tic was translated into French, and a copy presented to the Academy of Sciences, M. Condorcet addressed me in a fine speech. I was placed on the right hand of the president, during the sitting, and invited to come when I pleased, with a promise, that by calling out a member, I should always be admitted, as indeed I afterwards was. As individual men, their conduct was polite, attentive, and flattering. How different was that Condorcet at the academy and at the Jacobin club!! He was a man certainly of great merit, as a man of letters, but a monster in politics. But, as Robespierre was a still greater monster, Condorcet was sacrificed, after having himself brought destruction on the inferior class of monsters, who were not willing to go quite far enough.

wicked transactions, that they have given me a complete disgust to the violent Political Reformers, though I shall always wish for practical amelioration for the good of the country. I have changed my way of thinking in consequence of what I have seen, and am what they term an aristocrat, from that cause, and from no other. My father was a clergyman, and my grand-father a farmer, therefore I cannot boast of ancestry, for I can trace them no farther; and as for riches, I am not possessed of them, therefore from personal situation I should be a democrat, &c. &c." Mr. S. said, he could very well conceive the change, and that being a witness to the revolution, might make the strong impression I described; adding, that if any one thought that he went into the ideas promulgated in the book called the Rights of Man, they were greatly mistaken, &c. &c.

I mention this, to account for my strong attachment to the present government and order, as well as to prove that it has been of long duration; and, amidst misfortunes, of which I have had my full share, I have never felt my opinion on those points changed in the least degree. In this statement I never can be contradicted.*

* Amongst many strange exhibitions of a levelling spirit, that I was witness to in France, one was the burning the records belonging to all the nobility in that kingdom, which took place by order of the legislative assembly, at twelve o'clock in the day, in the Place Vendôme, in June, 1792. Several waggons arrived loaded with faggots, which were set on

The nobility, and the well-wishers of the present order of things, are not yet aware of the full extent of their danger; which is by no means over. I have found the greater number ready to encourage this undertaking; but I have found some few totally indifferent to what is thought of themselves, or of the order to which they belong. I can only say, that if such a spirit had been general, this nation would not now have been the envy of the world, and the prop of liberty.

Having shewn that there are great advantages arising from an hereditary nobility, and that this nation owes much to their exertions, one concluding observation only occurs to me, in answer to the prevailing opinion, that preference is alone due to personal merit. Such a preference, however well founded it may be, would be attended with the greatest inconveniency, from the envy it excites, and the difficulty of ascertaining, by any impartial or satisfactory rule, to whom it is due. Hereditary nobility, amongst other things, are free from those disadvantages; so that, upon the whole, there is not one of the institutions we possess, viewed in every point, more essential to the maintenance of a free mixed constitution, than an hereditary nobility, who pos-

fire, when a number of other waggons, filled with large folio volumes, superbly bound in morocco and velvet, were thrown into the flames, amidst a mob that rejoiced at this triumph over hereditary rank and title.

ness a share in the legislation of the country.* And in this work it has been proved, that in time past the country has owed much to that order, which HAS PRODUCED MORE THAN ITS NATURAL PROPORTION OF MEN REMARKABLE FOR THEIR TALENTS AND VIRTUE.

Having thus given the intention, as well as the result of my work, as it relates to British Peers, a few observations only remain, relative to the Scottish nobility, those of Ireland, and the baronets; as it would be swelling this address too much, to give all that will be contained in the Prefatory matter belonging to them.

As the advantage of the British House of Peers essentially consists in the members being independent, and not elected; but sitting each in his own right: it follows, as a corrolary to that proposition, that the purity of the House of Peers is injured, by the admission of members who are elective.

By the Union with SCOTLAND, sixteen Peers

* Even Oliver Cromwell, towards the end of his career, after he had tried a number of schemes, had recourse to a House of Peers; and, where nobility has been demolished on the continent, it is rising up in a new way, notwithstanding the disposition of the revolutionists to resist the restoration of any distinguished rank of persons. The question of hereditary nobility is very similar to that of hereditary monarchy, in preference to elective monarchy. Mr. Hume, notwithstanding his bias to a republican system, prefers elective monarchy; and in this case his opinion may be trusted, as it is at variance with his inclination.

were introduced into the British House, who sit there by election, and by the worst species of election.—Electors, consisting of men who are themselves eligible, some of whom are always candidates, and most of whom aspire to that honour of being chosen.

The worst feature of the union, (in most respects a good measure, and upon the whole a very advantageous one), is, the situation in which it places the peerage of Scotland.—This work will prove, that it would be of great advantage to raise all the peers of Scotland to the British peerage, except sixteen, who would then sit in the house without election.—This would render the nobility of Scotland independent of court influence, as they ought to be, and as they were before the union, and would do away the disadvantages felt by those peers who are not elected to be of the sixteen, and who neither have the rights of commoners nor of peers. They are eligible, yet have only the power of voting at elections ! A power rather vexatious than attended with advantage: at the same time injurious to the British House of Peers.*

* It is not a little singular, that this disadvantage, the only real one of importance, arising from the union, should have been overlooked by Lord Belhaven, Mr. Fletcher, and the other able and true patriots, who, in their anxiety for the honour and independence of their country, foresaw many evils that never took place, and never were likely, while the real evil never seems to have occurred to them.

The Scottish nobility will appear to great advantage as able men and friends of their country, though the constant discord that took place there, before the union of the crowns, placed them frequently in difficult situations, but so unlike any thing that occurs at the present times, that the real merit or blame of the action requires the reader to imagine to himself the state of things at the time.—The preface to the volume will enable the reader to appreciate the actions of the nobility at the different periods, and if properly attended to, *the Scottish nobles will, with all possible speed, be raised to seats in the House of Lords, as being necessary for the purity of that house and their own independence.*

We have seen in our own days the union with Ireland, and that the same error has been fallen into with respect to a number of elective peers, with this disadvantage, that the number is greater, and the evil more permanent. The Irish peerage is to be kept up to its full number, whereas, that of Scotland, by the failure of heirs, and the occasional absorption of the Scottish title in an English one, will, in time, come to an end; but the Irish union provides particularly for the continuance of the evil.

It is an evil more extensive, more permanent, and more difficult to be overcome, than that respecting Scotland.* A remedy of a different nature must

* It does not, however, follow that government, or those who framed the union, thought this AN EVIL; on the contrary, as

therefore be applied, for the Irish peers are too numerous to be raised to the British peerage ; another mode, however, will be pointed out, of remedying in a great measure the evil, for such we consider the elective members in the House of Peers, and the situation in which the peers of Ireland are placed by the Union.

On the subject of Baronets, some matter, hitherto entirely new, will be brought forward, and the utility of that order explained, particularly since the union with Ireland has prevented the creation of Irish peers, and as the creation of British peers affects the legislature in a way that renders it necessary to circumscribe the number with a peculiar degree of attention.

On the whole, the English, Scottish, and Irish peers, will all find the Work on FAMILY ANTIQUITY such as it has been announced and intended, and

they could not be ignorant of the effect, with regard to Scotland, they probably intended it as a means of making government more practicable ; or, in other words, the House of Peers more manageable and less independent.

therefore deserving of their support, as being THE BEST, AND PERHAPS THE ONLY WAY, TO REMOVE PREJUDICES AGAINST HEREDITARY RANK, AND TO PROCURE FOR THOSE BY WHOM IT IS ENJOYED THE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC OPINION.

N.B. The Subscribers to the Work will find it well to have the Charts either mounted on rollers, or framed and varnished; which can be done at a very trifling expence, and preserves them unsoiled and untorn.

FINIS.

